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AUSTIN ON AYER'S EPISTEMOLOGY

A THESIS

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by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Austin on Ayer's Epistemology, submitted by Steven A. MacLeod Burns in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This is a thesis in epistemology. It is concerned with demonstrating that primary experience cannot be adequately described in terms of 'given' and 'simples'. 'Bare particulars directly apprehended', for instance, is not a satisfactory way to characterize the foundation of empirical knowledge. This contention is presented through an examination of a confrontation between J.L. Austin and A.J. Ayer.

Chapter I examines Austin's "How to Talk", a paper in which a model simplified speech situation is described. It is argued in the thesis that the 'items' of the universe which this language is about are simples--named but not described. It is then contended that such items cannot be named, nor can they even be perceived.

Chapter II deals with Ayer's phenomenalism, especially in The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge. His 'sense-data', when interpreted consistently with his explanation of 'incorrigibility' and 'direct awareness', are shown to be vulnerable to the same objections made to Austin's items.

Chapter III discusses 'evidence'. This thesis contends that Austin's arguments against Ayer's concept of 'evidence' are good ones, and that they are good because they are based on the rejection of the position that experience comprises given simples. Thus, indirectly, his arguments expose Austin's own errors in "How to Talk".

AUSTIN ON AYER'S EPISTEMOLOGY

CHAPTER I

AUSTIN'S 'ITEMS'

PART 1: The Simplified Language Situation in "How to Talk".

In his 1953 paper, "How to Talk--some simple ways",¹ J. L. Austin conducts an investigation of certain speech acts such as identifying, instancing, calling and naming. The first step in the investigation consists in the establishment of an elementary speech situation. From this speech situation are eliminated all the complications of language which are not relevant to the particular speech acts in which Austin is interested. Austin claims that we sometimes regard ourselves as being in this type of speech situation. His enterprise is to be regarded not only as an attempt to formalize one aspect of language, but also as a functional simplification of how we sometimes talk, consciously expounded by Austin as an enlightening insight into how language works. I propose to outline the simplified language situation, explain why it is misconceived, and argue that its confusions are the result of an epistemological oversight on Austin's part. It is the nature of this

¹ In J.L. Austin, Philosophical Papers, J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (eds.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961, p. 181.

particular kind of oversight which will be central to my thesis.

The world consists of numerous individual ITEMS, totally and equally distinct from every other item. Each item is of one and only one definite TYPE, which totally and equally differs from every other type. Numerous items may be of the same type, but no item is of more than one type.

The world also contains perceptive, language-using beings who apprehend item and type by inspection merely, and who utter statements about them.

The language which is used in this world permits of the utterance of sentences of one form only: "I is a T". Each of the vocables which may be inserted in place of "I" (called "I-words") is fixed by a (semantic) convention as referring uniquely to its own item. Each of the vocables which may be inserted in place of "T" ("T-words") is fixed by a convention which associates such vocables with types, one to one. Any language act--and only such acts--which consists of an I-word followed by "is a" followed by a T-word will be a sentence in the language.

These CONVENTIONS of SENSE and REFERENCE connect the language to the world. Some of the legitimate (well-formed) sentences are true and some are false.

Superficially, any language in which words refer to things in the world and in which statements can be made about those things is a comprehensible simplification of language. In

fact I should think that, as Austin claims, we probably do sometimes regard ourselves for current purposes as being linguistically in such a situation. I am less than eager, however, to assume that a model often used is one which should be accepted uncritically as the basis of a further investigation. Austin justifies his use of the model not by arguments to its coherence or its conceptual advantages, but simply by its being used in our everyday thought and language about the uses of speech. This fact in turn is relevant because Austin claims to be doing no more than tracking down the detail of our ordinary uses of words about speech--perhaps being compelled in the end to straighten them out to some extent. It seems obvious, however, that Austin is doing more straightening out than he will admit to. He claims to find a markable and useful distinction at nearly every point at which one's language differs. What appear to be two ways of saying the same thing are in fact marking a distinction that we are not always careful to make. The implication is that the distinctions are there to be noticed if one looks for them.

If, as I suspect, the distinctions are not so much there to be found as invented in the interest of clarity, coherence, or immediate relevance to a topic of interest (Austin often suggests this is the case: "It is necessary first to be careful with, but also to be brutal with, to torture, to fake and to override, ordinary language."¹), then it is an error to

¹ Austin, "A Plea for Excuses", ibid., p. 134.

give such priority to a model of how the language works which is part of the language itself, and subject neither to brutality nor even to straightening out, yet which is not justified in any other way. Such a model cannot legitimately be used as the basis of further argument.

Austin so uses it nevertheless. It would seem that some of the following considerations might have misled him into thinking himself justified. In any instance of identifying, say, there seem to be two terms involved, the one identified and the other that which the former is identified as. Austin's schema involves the two terms and provides for what superficially appears to be the relation granted them by an identification. It also seems to be most appropriate for accomplishing other speech acts. Fitting an adjective to a demonstrative pronoun appears reducible to fitting a type-label to an object name ("This is green", to "1235 is a green-something".), and demonstrative actions (identifying the prettiest girl at the supermarket cash-registers by standing in the appropriate queue), or elliptical expressions ("Try this", identifying a full-bodied beer, or "Yes indeed", classifying a blonde) seem to be reducible to the "I is a T" formula. The model seems to be a basic one, then, common to a great many different communicative acts, and the key to such related activities as identifying, calling, naming, and so on. Why not use this model of a speech situation, since it seems at least as good as any other model, as a basis of a close

analysis of the speech acts we are concerned about?

There is further evidence in favour of Austin's using the given model, moreover. It seems appropriate for separating the main elements in the different speech acts which Austin is looking forward to talking about. "Bill is a boor", can be a case of giving a description of Bill, or a case of giving an example of a boor. What other model would allow this distinction to be made so clearly? Since Austin's purpose is to go on from there, carefully distinguishing instancing from stating, calling from classing or exemplifying, and so on, it appears quite unlikely that any other model will do as well, or that any more time need be spent on the details of this one. It has the obviously necessary qualifications, and specifically leaves out the irrelevant and distracting elements (about which more will be said very shortly).

On these grounds Austin can be excused for adopting the model--it is so clearly appropriate to his purposes. It is still unfortunate that he felt that he could treat it so uncritically. I hope to show that as a simplification of a language situation it just does not work. And if the model is not adequate as the basis for the speech acts, how are we then to credit the subsequent analysis of such acts? Though his reputed error may be understandable, it seems very serious. Why do I claim that the model does not work? Its inadequacy should be sufficiently demonstrated by the following three points.

A. First, in eliminating irrelevancies from the simplified speech situation Austin has made it impossible for one item to be distinguished from another. The items (and types) are totally distinct from one another. They may only be identified or connected with their type (in the case of items), or with their items (in the case of types). But would items not have something further in common? in general features, perhaps, as in being coloured? or even in being things or items?

This must be ruled out--perhaps by the consideration that in these other respects every item in our world is identical with every other, so that nothing can be said about them: or perhaps by alterations and refinements....: but anyway, by the ruling that our language is not going to be equipped to deal with any such further features.¹

By the same argument that allows him to eliminate similarities so that nothing of the sort can be part of a description of the items ("every item is identical in these respects with every other so that nothing can be said about them"), Austin could have eliminated the differences, too. Each item is "totally and equally" distinct from every other. This either means that each item stands in exactly the same relation to every other, or else (on the grounds of "totally", perhaps) it means that they stand in no relation as such at all to each other. In either case every item is identical in these respects to every other, so that nothing can be

¹ Austin, "How to Talk", ibid., p. 182.

said about them. They might as well be identical. In fact the point of this argument is that they are identical. There is nothing that we can say about one being different from another because we cannot notice anything different. If we could notice it we could mention it, unless our language were impoverished, but Austin is not just impoverishing the language, he is impoverishing the world first. And rightly so, in his terms, for he consistently maintains that language depends on the world in such a way that it must be prised off it, a word at a time, and purified of distinctions that are not first in the world.¹

Notice, then, that "totally distinct" (with its attendant phrases: "equally distinct" and "nothing can be said about them") might well say "identical", for unless the items are different in some way, specifiable or noticable, we cannot say that for any practical purpose they are distinguishable at all. It is my claim that Austin's items cannot be told apart. This is not only true of the items of one type (that they are indistinguishable from one another appears rather immediately to be the case, since the only thing noticable about them is that they each belong to the one type--so that they are identical with one another in this regard as well as in all others), but is also true, I think, about any items, even if they be of different types. Items of dif-

¹ See, e.g., a passage in "Truth", ibid., pp. 89-90, and one in "A Plea for Excuses", ibid., pp. 129-130.

ferent types are just as ("equally") "totally distinct" from them as from items of their own type: i.e., identical with them as far as one can ever tell. Or, again, if types are "totally and equally different" so that nothing can be noticed that will help distinguish them either, then they become, in effect, identical, and belonging to different types is still not grounds for telling items apart.

The relationship between items and types is, in its turn, just as problematic as that between items. I suspect that an item could not be distinguished from a type, if not for any other then for the following reason: no item can be distinguished at all. It cannot be distinguished as an item, as opposed either to another item (which has been argued), or as opposed to anything else (for the same reasons). It could not--to use sight as an analogy for what Austin calls "inspection"--be seen; it could not be picked out from its background or surroundings, for it would in that case have noticable traits lacking to the surroundings, or vice versa. The possibility of saying any such things about any item has been ruled out. With that possibility goes the possibility of the item's being noticed as an item at all. There is nothing distinguishable to pick out, name, or identify. To notice its type, or to relate it to a type, is thus quite impossible.

Certainly Austin does not say all of this deliberately. I am sure that if it were suggested to him that the items in

his simplified speech situation could not be distinguished from one another or from anything else he would reject the suggestion as preposterous. Further, he has been quite clear about these same issues elsewhere. He might say:

The world must exhibit (we must observe) similarities and dissimilarities (there could not be the one without the other): if everything were either absolutely indistinguishable from anything else or completely unlike anything else, there would be nothing to say.¹

What I do want to claim, however, is that Austin does not speak that way in "How to Talk". On the basis of "totally and equally distinct", "nothing can be said about them", "identical with every other", and "apprehended by inspection merely"--which is, after all, practically everything that Austin says by way of explaining what items are--the items so described should, at least within one type, be as individuals indistinguishable. The grounds for inter-type distinctions are questionable, moreover, and should all of my objections be sound then the items would indeed be unperceivable.

A different approach to the item is discussed in the second set of remarks.

B. Second, the possibility of naming the items, of their being any connection between language and the world (described by Austin as "conventions of reference" in this particular case), becomes questionable. Should the above analysis of the status of items in the world be accurate, then, of course, no more can be said in defense of the item,

¹ Austin, "Truth", ibid., p. 89.

nor need be said in criticism thereof. But if we leave aside what Austin says on the one matter, and deal with the relation between names and items on the basis of what Austin says about that matter, we may be profitably instructed. Vocables are to be connected to items by conventions of reference. Each item has had allotted to it its own I-word by which it is uniquely referred to, and each I-word similarly has its own item. There are two main issues at stake: one concerns the notion of 'convention', and the connection which that establishes between word and world; the other concerns 'naming' or 'reference'. Let us discuss the latter first.

We shall speak of I-words not as '(proper) names', of which they are at most only a primitive variety, but as references.¹ It is widely agreed that ordinary proper names involve descriptions; there is a descriptive element to their employment, and describable features may be specified as relevant criteria for the use of the name. To be a primitive variety of proper name, however, suggests being a logically proper name. Naming, when purified of all describing, is the allotting of a logically proper name to a logical simple. That is a separate problem, and one which has been most severely taken apart. The discussion relevant to Austin's references appears to me to be capped off by Strawson when he says: "A name is worthless without a backing of descriptions

¹ Austin, "How to Talk", ibid., pp. 182-183.

which can be produced on demand."¹

The problem for Austin is that if his I-words do not involve descriptions they will be unusable, and if they do they will imply that there are describable features of items after all. In Strawson's words, a name will be useless if not backed by possible descriptions, for if it does not carry any possible description then there is no way of recognizing or identifying the object being named. The name cannot in such a case be applied or re-applied. The previous section claimed that items cannot be distinguished because they have no distinguishing features about which something might be said. Austin's desire to make I-words into just references, with no attendant descriptions, is further indication of the justice of that claim. Judging by his terminology, "references", "at most a primitive variety of proper names", Austin is not opting for the alternative position, that I-words be backed by descriptions, and that items have further features about which something may be said. In either case, I-words name or refer to items in a way which does not seem adequately clear.

But what about the conventions of reference, by which the descriptionless name is to be attached to the item--the language to the world? No matter how sturdy the conventions may be, or how unquestioned, they do not help one apply a

¹ P.F. Strawson, Individuals: an essay in descriptive metaphysics, London, Methuen, 1959, p. 20.

vocable to an item with consistency unless for some reason. The reason has to be something that can be noticed regularly about the item with which the convention can connect the name. Lacking such a characteristic (which would give us more to say about an item than Austin allows, of course) we cannot get our conventions going.

No-one would know how to follow one of Austin's conventions. One item would be exactly as good a candidate as another, as far as anyone could tell, for being thought the conventional object of a given I-word. There would be no describable features of a situation which would allow us to recognize it as a situation in which a certain convention was relevant.

To use different terminology, acting conventionally is in every case (at least implicitly) to follow a rule. It does not make sense to speak of rule-following behaviour in a situation in which there cannot be criteria for applying the rule, or at least for recognizing how the implicit rule is being followed. It may be concluded, therefore, that Austin's conventions of reference between the referring I-words and the items are not sufficient for explaining the link which must obtain between word and object.

C. Third, the speech acts about which Austin is so concerned that he overlooked the inadequacy of his model language--the acts of identifying, describing, etc.--cannot be

distinguished on the basis of Austin's own description of them. This must make the importance of the model to the subsequent analysis quite clear. It might previously have been tempting to say that the simplified language situation is not carefully enough worked out, but that the subsequent analysis of speech acts is a clear and competent piece of work on its own. Now even that seems dubitable. This is so because we now find that in fitting an item to a type, even granting that we could get that far, the difference between the type and the item would not be clear. The same type would fit any and all of the items of its group (type) in exactly the same way, and it would fit any one of them exactly (as distinguished from language situation S₁ in which Austin later allows for partial matches), so that there would seem to be no way in which the type could be told from the item. Certainly, even if type and item could be distinguished without added characteristics, as Austin would have it, neither would add anything to the other. There would be nothing irrelevant about the item that would not fit to the type, and nothing 'universal' about the type which would overlap the item. Saying 'I is a T' and 'I is a T' (which differentiates between exemplifying and describing, for example) does not allow of noticable distinction in Austin's simplified language situation because saying 'I is a T' does not add a thing to either term that one could notice. There is nothing asymmetrical about the relationship between item

and type; there is no reason for suggesting that exemplifying and describing could be distinguished on this model.

Even getting the type and item together is a mysterious achievement which is explained as: "purely natural--apprehended by inspection without admixture of convention."¹ If, on the one hand, we grant with Austin this apprehension by inspection of the natural link, or match, between item and type, then it will be very unlikely that an account of error could be given. "By inspection" indicates that nothing of the form of a convention or judgment is operating when one notices that 1227 is a rhombus. One simply notes the natural match between item and type, apprehends the match directly. Yet Austin insists, of course, on the possibility of error. It is crucial to his demonstration of how speech acts work to be able to show how they can go wrong, for this defines, puts the limits on, what is meant by going right, i.e., what a given speech act amounts to. "Misstating shows that we do not correctly appraise the type of the item....To misinstance reveals misconception of the sense of the name."² There are on this account misjudgments, misappraisals, misconceptions, all of which make the apprehension of the match between an item and a type not at all the sort of thing one does "naturally", but which is done for reasons, by comparing, judging, selecting the relevant and the irrelevant, and

¹ Austin, "How to Talk", op. cit., p. 184, note 2.

² Ibid., p. 192.

leaving legitimate room for error. This room for error is not allowed in the Austin model, in which one could never, in effect, say 'I is a T because...', but only 'I apprehend that I is a T', where the apprehending is done by "nature" as opposed to being done on the basis of noticable distinctions.

Austin's model speech situation does not work. ("All this is, I hope, simple.") It is not a surprise that he failed to justify it as I suggested that he ought to have done. He could not have justified it as it stands anyway. This model situation is one in which speech appears to be impossible!

It is my claim that, first, there are errors in Austin's model, and, second, that these errors reflect errors in epistemology. They at least reflect a lack of concern for the sort of epistemological questions which may well be of radical importance in this case. It is not necessary (or even correct) to claim that Austin's model fails to be satisfactory because it is the wrong sort of model. In a very general sense fitting name words to type words, and vice versa, is exactly what one must be concerned about if one is to examine speech acts of the kind Austin wishes to, and the 'I is a T' model is quite the simplest and most direct one possible. What does go wrong stems from Austin's deliberate omissions. The characteristics which he has ruled out include

some which are needed by any such speech situation. The nature of language has been not only simplified but falsified by the suggestion that a section of it may be studied in isolation not only from other sections of the language (which is possible) but from its foundation as well, from its connections with the world.

* * *

PART 2: A Working Model from Wittgenstein.

There is a point often made--and usually misunderstood or misapplied--which is to the effect that the isolating of a part from the whole does not make the part more susceptible to accurate analysis, but, rather, makes it a different object, taken out of context and not properly comprehensible as a result. I would like to distinguish my point from this one. I am not, that is, arguing that Austin cannot get his model going successfully on the grounds that no such isolation of a part from the whole can be successful. By discussing a model speech situation which does work I shall make this point clear enough. I also hope to illustrate those virtues which are lacking Austin's model, and thus to throw some constructive light on the issues I have so far belaboured.

The example to which I refer is Wittgenstein's; it is first presented in remark #2 of his Philosophical Investigations. A builder and his assistant share a language of four

words. "Slab", "block", etc., are uttered by the builder, heard by the assistant, and are intended by the former and interpreted by the latter as requests for building-stones of the appropriate type.¹ Let us look first at some characteristics which are included in this model, then at some which significantly are not excluded from it.

First, this language model, like Austin's, is vastly simplified (but not, like Austin's, over-simplified). Then, both make available the idea of the 'performative' function of language. The words in Wittgenstein's language are never correctly used unless their utterance is a request or an order. Austin's model, of course, is also used to exemplify speech acts, the typing of an item, the exemplifying of a type, and so on. In remark #7, by introducing naming and teaching, Wittgenstein adds the complication--present in the Austin model from the start--of there being more than one act which can be performed by the uttering of one of the permissible locutions in the language. Again, Wittgenstein's words are connected to the world in much the same way as Austin's are intended to be. They conventionally signify objects (or objects of a type, to be more precise). When in #8 the demonstrative "this" is added to the language there is an equivalent for Austin's item-words (i.e., particular objects can be referred to). One might even point out that it would not be too difficult, working from others of Witt-

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1958.

genstein's suggestions (about ostensive definition, for example, and about the learning of word uses), to use this simplified speech situation as a basis for the elucidation of the speech acts with which Austin is particularly concerned. This, of course, is not Wittgenstein's intention, and my aim is to illustrate a speech situation which is simplified but not falsified, but it seems not unhelpful to show that the example I have chosen is usable even in the context in which Austin's is supposed to be usable.

There are extensive similarities between the models, then. What makes Wittgenstein's usable whereas Austin's is not? The answer I shall suggest (to the question which I am claiming needs to be asked--for I have not yet shown why I take Wittgenstein's model to be usable) is concerned with a number of things which Wittgenstein does not exclude from his language game. He has impoverished the world of many objects, and the objects remaining have been impoverished of many of their characteristics (There are little more than building materials and houses, and the slabs and blocks need only have shape. Wittgenstein adds different colours later as a complicating factor.), but he has not eliminated their individuality and distinguishability. In Austin's situation it is necessary to be able to tell the items apart (each by its own name), but this is ruled impossible in fact. In Wittgenstein's game you cannot tell slab A from slab B by name, but you do have the unquestioned ability to pick out a slab as

an object, as distinct from the slab next to it or under it, and separate from the ground on which it lies. And it can be picked up--it has a claim to individuality which Austin's items do not have at all. In a narrower context (#6) Wittgenstein hints at Austin's difficulty: only in conjunction with the rest of its circumstances, and an understanding of the connections relating it to them, could a slab be a slab; and, separated from its support, it is not even a slab (or item)--"it may be anything (if one can say anything at all about it), or nothing (if one cannot say anything about)." ¹

In Part 1 it was argued that Austin rules out the possibility of distinguishing one item from another, and now we see that Wittgenstein has not excluded that possibility. True, he only allows us to speak of any number of slabs in the one way--as Austin does, too--but that is not to say that though we find it not worth mentioning (for one slab will do just as well as another), there is no possibility of noticing that one slab is not the same item as another slab. That is, we do not in fact mention that this slab is a different one from that slab, but certainly are able to make the observation, to notice the difference. As a popular saying has it: "We remark what is remarkable." There is no rule against what is not said, however. In Austin's model the differentiating remarks are not made, nor can they be made in the grammar of the language, but neither can the observa-

¹ Ibid., remark #6.

tions be made on the basis of which there would be something to say about the world if we had interest enough in saying it and language to say it in.

In the second objection to Austin's model it was argued that he excludes the very grounds on which it would be possible to establish consistency of usage (one word for the same item met on separate occasions): that is, he excluded from the items of his universe any characteristics by which one might judge that the present item was indeed the same one that we called "1227" last time. Somehow Austin wanted us to apprehend the essence of the item, and know how to apply a name to it on successive occasions, without being able to distinguish any properties of the item. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, does not rule this out. He is not at all unhappy about not specifying that we must not assume that the builder's assistant can actually tell that (say) this slab is the same one I referred to earlier--it is the one by my left foot. Wittgenstein does not care, at least at the beginning, to get naming going. Austin does. Yet it is the former's model on which it is allowed to be possible that a language user might notice distinct properties of a given item which would allow him to re-identify it and to apply to it with consistency a referring term.

Nor does Wittgenstein legislate against the possibility of error. Austin, we said, rules out the possibility of error. Austin's different items are picked out "by inspection

merely", which is clearly intended to eliminate picking out items by judging them according to certain criteria or standards. Wittgenstein has not made it unthinkable for an assistant to bring a block when the builder called, "Slab", because he picked up an object of the right length and width but failed to notice the thickness. Errors of judgment about facts, or about which of these two objects is 1227, or about whether this object is indeed 1229 (judgments ruled impossible, we have shown, by Austin), or about which type this object rightly belongs to--such errors cannot be committed on Austin's model. They are not ruled out by Wittgenstein.

The crucial differences between the simplified language situations of Austin and Wittgenstein, then, seem to be the ones marked by the things which Wittgenstein did not rule out: the possibilities of distinguishing items, of re-identifying in order to apply references with consistency, and of making factual errors. A further difference worth noting is their treatment of the language-users. Wittgenstein's are clearly rather ordinary human beings engaged in a limited number of activities, using language for a small and primitive area of communication. Austin's are never even mentioned. We learn only of what can be done with this language in this universe--implying the sort of beings who are capable of engaging in the described activities. That they are able to do things which are demonstrably impossible suggests that

they are indeed very special creatures, or that Austin took them to be so marginally relevant that they warranted no mention, and not even an implied concern with the nature of the activities in which they are supposed to engage. This point will be examined further at a later stage, but at present it is sufficient to say that if we are centering our criticisms on epistemological problems, then it must be relevant to ask about the knowers as well as about the known; it must be important to ask about the sort of activity engaged in by (or, perhaps, the natures of) the beings concerned--this activity (or nature) being presupposed in the claim that these beings are to produce judgments about how to use a given part of a language in a given situation.

I have argued, then, not that Austin's model of a simplified speech situation is in principle unusable, if the principle involved is that any simplified speech situation is impossible just because it is a simplified part of language, but rather that demands are articulated which render speech a logical impossibility in this particular case. True Austin includes the obvious aspects of the linguistic tools and capabilities required for engaging in the speech acts of identifying, exemplifying, and so on, but he rules out several crucial aspects of the activities involved. There is no need to argue for the priority of the crucial over the merely obvious, in order to insist that Austin owed more respect to those crucial aspects of his speech situation than he gives

evidence of paying. The inadequacies of his language model limit the weight of his subsequent project in the rest of the paper, where he deals so carefully with distinctions between various (impossible) speech acts. It is arguable that in spite of the apparent inadequacy of his model situation, Austin has still done useful work in the subsequent part of his paper. Be that as it may, his inclusion of the model in its given form is evidence that Austin did not make a serious attempt to answer certain standard epistemological questions, either being unaware of them, or thinking them irrelevant.

The questions which he might have asked, and attempted to answer, are ones about the nature of primitive experience. They are questions with which he is vitally concerned in Sense and Sensibilia,¹ because Ayer tries to answer just such questions. In a tentative vein let me formulate a few questions of the type concerned:

1. Are items distinguishable as such?
2. Are items distinguishable one from another?
3. Are items re-identifiable?
4. Can errors be made?
5. By whom are these activities performed (or these experiences had)?
6. In what ways are these activities (or experiences) performed (or had)?
7. On what bases are these activities possible?
8. What is the nature of items and identifiability?

¹ Austin, Sense and Sensibilia, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962.

Such questions are not handled with striking success by phrases like, "apprehended by inspection merely". On the other hand, their answers are vital to any responsible talk about such activities as identifying, picking out items in order give them names, exemplifying, and so on, i.e., just those activities which concern Austin in "How to Talk". Having demonstrated Austin's dereliction on these points, I intend eventually to describe a form of argument which will have two virtues. First, it will exemplify the sort of concern, open or implied, which our unanswered questions seem to demand. Second, it will be directly relevant to a similar form of argument used by Austin himself in Sense and Sensibilia. The example once again will be from Wittgenstein, but nothing will be made of that.

First it seems important to say more about the rather mysterious topic generally called "epistemological problems", to which I have frequently alluded. I have discussed difficulties in Austin which I claim reflect a lack of interest in certain philosophically relevant questions. I have listed a few formulations of that sort of question. Now I hope to make clearer just what it is I think Austin is not noticing about this area. I want to outline the aspects which I think relevant but Austin has not considered, and which constitute the key to all those errors which we have discussed.

PART 3: Experience of an Item: the Fundamentals.

Surrounding the questions which were asked at the end of the last part there are clustered many problems. My concern is with a few, specific problems which can, perhaps, best be illustrated if we consider one of Austin's suggested items. The item is to be apprehended merely by inspection, and nothing can be said about it; no further observations can be made than just that here I have item 'I'. Austin suggests that this might appear comprehensible if "every item is either a colour-patch of the same pure red, or a noise of the same definite pitch, intensity, etc., or a smell, etc."¹ Taking the patch of pure red as a sample item, what can we say about the apprehension of it?

The unit, the individual item, does not have the priority which Austin seems to think it can have--given only that he defines carefully enough what can and cannot be experienced about it. Austin wants his items to be primary elements of experience so that they can be experienced simply, without prior, or necessarily-concomitant, observations being possible. They are given in such a way that they can be referred to clearly in any sentence of the type, 'I is a T', yet nothing (further) can be said about them or noticed about them. On the other hand it seems impossible that an item be referred to without incurring other experiences.

¹ Austin, "How to Talk", op. cit., p. 182.

There are, I will argue, steps involved in the apprehending of an item which contradict the claim that this apprehension can be primary in the sense required by Austin's theory.

Imagine a situation in which I am to apprehend a red patch, and nothing but a red patch. I shall outline four ways in which this might be made specific: the first will be the most ordinary, common-sense way; and the second, third and fourth will be various precise attempts to offer an interpretation compatible with Austin's demands. The four, I think, will exhaust the relevant possibilities, and I shall argue that none is both compatible with what Austin demands and a coherent statement of what might be meant by the locution, "apprehend a red patch and nothing but a red patch."

A. There are many ordinary situations in which we might be inclined to speak of seeing a red patch and nothing but a red patch. A magician is performing, for instance, and says: "You see this red patch, a perfectly ordinary red patch, and now we'll put it here on the table. Watch carefully. You can see the red patch and nothing but the red patch. Now, O MAYALAK ARMY! There you have three baby elephants ballet dancing on the red patch." And so, in such a case, we do see the item and nothing but the item in a perfectly ordinary sense. But we can also see the table, we are tempted to attend carefully to the magician's hands which are moving suspiciously at the edge of our field of vision, and so on. Austin, of course, does not allow the possibility of such observation and/or talk.

B. The red patch occupies a limited portion of my field of vision. It may be a patch on a wall, a colour sample on a chart, an after-image burning brightly in the midst of grey emptiness, or the glow of sunset on a calm lake. In any such case there is bound to be an item (patch) and a ground. The red patch will be distinguishable from that which is not itself. (That is, it will be distinguishable from the rest of the wall, from the table the sample lies on, from the grey emptiness, or from the remainder of lake and sky.) This will be the basis for my being able to pick out the red patch. I am not now describing the conditions for re-identifying the colour of this patch. Even that is more complex than this most elementary step. I must, however, be able to tell that this red patch begins here, ends there (at least roughly), which implies the ability to tell red from the other colours. I can at least say that this colour is different from that, though admittedly I need not be able to say how, or to tell which was which next time I see them. In telling the red patch from the rest of the situation I am able, necessarily, to determine the shape of the red patch. So it is that the item I was to have apprehended as primary, simple, alone and not complicated by the possibility of other observations, cannot be so uncluttered. If it is to be a red patch which occupies less than the total range of my vision, then in order to apprehend it I will have to be able to apprehend the rest of the field, too; unless I can appre-

hend the contrast then I surely will not be able to apprehend the item; it will be indistinguishable from its surroundings--it will go unnoticed and unapprehended.

C. Clearly in 'B' it is the case that I can either not apprehend the item at all, or else I am able to do so only while being able to distinguish other things in contrast, which means, in effect, that I am able to say more things about the item than Austin allows. But surely it is unfair to take a red patch in the middle of a pink and yellow wall as a typical example of an item. Austin, given any sort of sympathetic reading, must intend that the red patch will fully occupy our sense field to the exclusion of all other visibles. This is, I assume, the point of making the items of other types each fully contained in a different area of sensation--some items being red patches, and some being noises of the same pitch and intensity (but none being blue patches). In this way the items of a type are identical (nothing can be said or observed about them that will make it possible to tell one item of a particular type from another of the same type), though distinct (each with a different name). There are no grounds for detecting added features of different types, either, that might lead to contrasts and comparisons, for each is of a completely different order, occupying the area of a different sense. Objects of sight-only do not overlap or contrast in any way with objects of hearing-only when there exists no faculty or sense which could make com-

parisons by having something to observe in both types of object. Surely it is part of this suggestion that there be no more to the sense of sight than the perceiving of red patches; items are not to be units in contrast with their backgrounds, but simply the content of one sort of experience--the total content. The item, red patch, then, will occupy the entire range of vision and will not admit of such spatial or colour contrasts as occupied us in the previous criticism of items.

Unless I were able to say, in the course of apprehending two items of the same type one after the other, that now I have stopped apprehending 1228 and am apprehending 1235, which, of course, involves telling the difference between two items in terms which allow saying more about them than is permitted, I would not be satisfied with this formulation of the experiencing of items, either. But if we leave aside even this very basic complication--the difference between two items of the same type--and speak only of the most primitive point--the experience of an item by itself--there are still detectable problems. Surface and texture need not be noticeable, variations in colour intensity, etc., do not exist, and we have ruled out limits of shape and the contiguity of contrasting patches. The red-patch-item is pure, not complicated by any further characteristics, nor limited by any contrasts.

But then how is it that we can apprehend it? Do we not notice temporal limits? The alternative must be that we

have always apprehended this item, this redness has been the constant object of our visual experience without variation or detectable break of any kind. Can we then have noticed that we were experiencing such-and-such an item? Perhaps it will be sufficient to have a memory or an innate concept against which the unqualified experience can be judged? But these are all variations on the one theme: it is not sensible to speak of experience which is not based on any noticeable distinctions. Austin's qualification (that different types of items be objects of different senses) does not salvage his case.

D. Now consider the red patch to be the totality of our vision. If we ignore the extra observations that seemed to be involved in the last attempt--if we ignore for the moment the ramifications of time and memory--are we closer to the primitive experience of an item? Perhaps we might be suspended in a position from which we are surrounded by walls done in a uniform red, with no visible features other than the redness noticeable even by a moving eye. Nothing that we could see could constitute the grounds for any distinction-marking, for any observation other than that of the item, as such and uncomplicated. We do not even have to be able to say that red is involved in the experience (i.e., red as opposed to some other colour). There is just the one item--a simple object of experience.

For this red patch to be a sense content, for us to have an experience of it as the content of primitive observation (for us to have an experience of it), it will at least be necessary that we experience it. The minimal observation of the item involves at least one other observation (or its possibility); we must be able to note that the red patch is the object of our apprehension. Thus the distinction between the apprehending subject and the apprehended item can be made even when all else is denied us. Without this ultimate distinction there is no longer an experience, no longer the possibility of my being able to refer to an item. The item is a thing in the world, or at least an object of experience, something I can notice and refer to. None of this makes sense without this minimal distinction between the object of and the haver of the experience.

If I were to spell out my methodology I should say that my argument is formed this way: I ask that you try to imagine a case of an experience of an item about which nothing further is to be said. I describe likely sample cases. It proves impossible to imagine such cases. When made more precise they do not make sense. Then we say that the suggested situation is logically impossible. The idea of a pure unit of experience without prior or accompanying distinctions (which are or can be made) is contradictory; it is rather like asking for an experience which is not an experience.

The conclusion to this argument has two strengths. The strong form is this: if Austin's explicit requirements about the nature of our experience of the items in his model situation are strictly applied it is not possible consistently to account for any experience whatsoever. This is based on the cumulative weight of examples 'B', 'C' and 'D'. The weaker form is this: applying Austin's requirements makes it impossible to conceive of experiencing an item. This form is all that is needed to support the rest of the present thesis. It is based only on the remarks in 'B' and 'C', above. We may allow that Austin does not specifically rule out the possibility of the subject-object distinction, and this may make it conceivable that one should be able to have other sorts of experience, but it is still not possible to separate one item from another, or to re-identify any single item, and so it remains not sense to speak of apprehending items as Austin does.

There is a controversy in recent journals over a related point.¹ There is a great difference between a quality (such as 'redness') and a relation (such as 'to the left of'). The distinction between "relational properties" and "non-relational properties" has been used to drive a wedge between the bare particular as unexperienceable (as in my arguments), and the bare particular as something like the barest of possible

¹ I refer to two articles in particular: "Bare Particulars", in Philosophical Studies, January-February, 1963, by V.C. Chappell, and a rejoinder by E.B. Allaire in the same journal, January-February, 1965.

element of experience. The case may be outlined: The concept of a bare particular which has no further qualities than the one, single datum presented to us by it, and about which there is no more to be said than that it (naming it) is a case of X, is often attacked by those who point out that the particular must have further mentionable relations with other objects of apprehension. But these further properties are in every case just relational properties. The non-relational properties which give our particular its special character are in the case of a bare particular just one in number. A red patch will do as an example. The particular cannot be charged with unknowability or unapprehendability (as Austin's have been) because of course it has relational properties. But it remains a bare particular because of its single contribution to our experience. It is not divisible, we might say in defense of its particularity; it has no internal relations. Here we have a defense of an intelligible item.

I should argue that the distinction cannot be used to ruin my arguments, but that my line makes the distinction irrelevant (though not on that account useless in other contexts). First, the intelligibility of "non-relational properties" is in itself relational (which means, for instance, that redness can hardly be seen as redness unless it can be distinguished from non-redness, and that non-relational observations rest in every instance on relational ones).

Second, the bareness of the particular with its non-relational properties stripped to a single one is still hardly bare enough to make support for the epistemological claims associated with it by Austin (elimination of the possibility of noticing anything more about it), for there are many relationships yet to experience and to speak of.

I can take a green patch as a bare particular if it suits certain of my purposes. It is not given as such.

This chapter has been claiming not just that Austin is unclear in his exposition of a model speech situation, but that his lack of success is based on a particular form of mistake: that of believing that an element of experience can be apprehended as a simple unit, without prior or concomitant observations being possible. The truth of the matter appears to be that duality is prior to unity. This deserves precization in the following direction: the apprehension of an individual item depends upon the apprehension of at least one distinction between the item and something other than the item, in which latter apprehension at least two distinct objects are contained. The item purely by itself is a mock item--not a candidate for apprehension. In "How to Talk" Austin assumes that such items can be the contents of a model world, and can be apprehended. He is mistaken. I find it arguable, and interesting, that Austin elsewhere attacks A.J. Ayer for making a similar mistake. The next chapter will be occupied by an examination of Austin's "stalking horse".

CHAPTER II

AYER'S 'SENSE-DATA'

PART 1: The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge.

Ayer's program in The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge¹ can roughly be described as a phenomenalism which starts by seeking to understand how knowledge is based on experience, which gets around the problem of illusory experience by finding indubitable grounds in sense-data, and proceeds to explain the rules by which the world is constructed, and the grounds and limitations of our knowledge of that world. I shall outline the system and the way it holds together in the following four sections:

A. In most cases in which I am inclined to say in ordinary language that I know that something is the case I base the claim on some sort of sense experience. I know there is a beer in the refrigerator because I just saw one there. Now in many cases of such experience I am later confounded by a lack of confirmation for my claim. If I find no other way to explain the situation (intervening conditions would do as an explanation, e.g.: someone else removed the beer while I was not looking), I am often correct in concluding that I experienced an illusion. I "saw" an oasis on the horizon or

¹ A.J. Ayer, The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, London, MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1940.

a beer in the fridge, but there really was no such object there at the time. There are two cases, then: 1. I see a beer and there is a beer; 2. I see a beer and there is not a beer. Ayer begins here, arguing that there must be a content to experience which is common to both cases, both to that in which there is a real object, and to that in which there is not. This common content must consist of basic perceptibles which Ayer decides to call "sense-data".

[It is instructive to contrast Ayer's line of approach with that suggested by Austin, which is made up of retreats from ordinary statements by progressive hedging. "There is a tiger." "There seems to be a tiger." "It seems to me that there is a tiger." "It seems to me now that there is a tiger." "It seems to me now as if there were a tiger."¹ This is a less than flattering version of the development of the position Ayer holds regarding the content of experience, but not therefore an invalidating one (or an invalid one).]

B. We may be sure that we did experience these sense-data. The matter of external existence of the object they seem to represent needs more careful investigation, and will never be certain in the way that it is certain that we did have these particular experiences. Even when I am dreaming, and the entire world of objects and people and space and movement, and even my own body's activity, are not as they

¹ Austin, Sense and Sensibilia, p. 141. In another paper, very relevant to many of the issues here discussed, Austin argues in a similar manner. "Other Minds", Philosophical Papers, pp. 58-59.

appear to me, it cannot be doubted that I am experiencing something.

These sense-data are incorrigible, to speak loosely. This claim deserves much elucidation for Ayer qualifies it extensively, but we cannot be mistaken about our sense-data. They just are. We can make mistakes of a linguistic nature in speaking about the data, but never can we make factual mistakes. It is also an error to speak--as I have done--of a subject perceiving an object, at this level of abstraction. For, though it is true that I am undoubtedly experiencing something, it is presumptuous to insist that I am experiencing something. There is, in the elementary experience, no subject, no act, no object, just an occurrence, a simple awareness. (Ayer points out that now there is no gap between the knower and the known, and that the separation of mind and body is a sophisticated distinction which does not arise fundamentally, but only derivatively when we begin to construct entities from sense-data.) Sense-data, or the experiencing of them--which is the same thing--cannot be the source of empirical or factual error in this first instance, for they are not source or object of anything, they just are.

C. Given this all else arises. Given a stock of sense-data, a group of experiences, we recognize the possibility of "seeing as" and "being seen as" which accompanies them. The so-called illusion of the continued existence of

objects even when they are not present to the senses, and of their existence distinct from perception--which is a worrying problem for anyone who is inclined to agree that a sense-datum unsensed is an impossibility, a contradiction, and that sense-data are all the content of experience--can be explained by what Hume noted as the relations of "constancy" and "coherence" between impressions, and Mill called "the laws of the association of ideas."¹ The elementary relations which are experienced as holding between sense-data are the basis of the so-called "construction" of the external world (of extension, independent objects, physical space, etc.). Note the following crucial material:

The extension and figure of a visual sense-datum are sensibly "given" no less than its colour; and so are its spatial relations to other sense-data within the same visual field, including its "distance" from sense-data which belong to the body of the observer.²

Now we are prepared to construct the world from sense-data and these relations. The specific relations and their results for our talk about the external world are as follows:

(a) RESEMBLANCE. When sense-data enter into the constitution of the same thing (material object), when a group of data is "seen as" an apple, it is this relation--the resemblance or connectedness of each datum to the next--which gives the object its unity as an object. Involved in this relation is the observation of resemblance between contiguous

¹ Ayer, Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, pp. 243-245.

² Ibid., p. 246.

sense-data on which in part is based our attribution of numerical unity to the object.

(b) SIMILAR ENVIRONMENT. Having picked out a unitary object from its background on the basis of relation (a), we judge an object to be the same object at a later time if it stands in the same relation to its environmental data that it did earlier, or else if its path can be traced through "a series of partially overlapping sense-fields".¹ These relations are sufficient for constituting identity.

(c) SYSTEMATIC REPEATABILITY. It is necessary that the data occur in the same relations when sought in different instances. To be able to return to the spot and again see the tree you saw before, e.g., is to find that the sense-data stand in such a relation that they are public, durable, and so on, and this systematic reproducibility characterizes the externality, durability and objectivity of sense-data groups that we call objects.

(d) DEPENDENCE ON OBSERVER'S MOVEMENTS ONLY. Given that a group of sense-data constitutes an object (a group limited by (a), (b) and (c)), then if there are no changes in the group apart from those related to my own moving around (the changes of view-point of the subject or observer), it is a most durable part of the external world, situated in relation to other objects, and the ground, so that a system of time and space relations are clearly derivable.

¹ Ibid., p. 252.

Notice that the self is a concept built from sense-data following the same rules. Now, also, science, prediction, description, error and judgment can all be part of the possible discourse. Errors of fact quite different from those of language only, to which we were restricted when speaking of experience of sense-data, are now possible in every case of judging that we are experiencing a material object. The object is taken as more or less certain--but never completely certain. It is constructed of, or inferred from, the sense-data which undoubtedly did occur.

D. Having shown that this construction is possible, Ayer must still demonstrate that it is, and why it is, engaged in as a matter of fact. That is, we are capable of creating an object language. But why do we, instead of using a sense-datum language which would give more accurate description of the world we do experience? Ayer finds an empirical basis for the claim. There are biological demands, an animal instinct (Russell), or passions (Hume), which make the individual human seek continuity, predictability and intelligibility. The relations of cause and effect, the notion of knowledge about the future, the concept of agency, these are some of the sophisticated constructions which are arrived at by a combination of the four types of observed relations among the given sense-data. The difference between appearance and reality, between the truly durable, and the

dreamt, the misleading, the apparent or the hallucinatory, depends on the predictability of future experiences. If some sense organs or some conditions and some evidence gain privilege as primary or more real it is because of a subjective desire to predict, and a natural tendency to trust those aspects of previous experience which have misled one least.

This must suffice as an outline of the stalking horse that Austin and I are concerned to investigate. Now I shall clarify my interest by attempting to show weaknesses at particular points in Ayer's system. Most of my points will be relevant to the very specific problems about the nature of elementary experience--both of the primary data of sensibility, and of the consciousness or awareness thereof. The third chapter will then deal with a few of the points at which Austin makes his criticisms. Most of those criticisms which I find particularly relevant to my thesis are in Chapter 10 of Sense and Sensibilia, surrounding the topic of "in corrigibility". My points occupy the next three parts of the present chapter.

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PART 2: Objection: 'Construction'.

On the first page of the first chapter of the work which first brought wide attention to Ayer, in 1935, the following statement appears: "We may begin by criticising the meta-

physical thesis that philosophy affords us knowledge of a reality transcending the world of science and common sense."¹ Surely on these grounds Ayer should turn his weapons against sense-data, which are indeed the basic constituents of reality, and are beyond verification. To claim such things about any entity must qualify the entity as "metaphysical", and make knowledge thereof quite incredible. The alternative appears to be this: that sense-data are just novel kinds of material object. They are not, of course, for that would imply, to Ayer, at least, conscious subjects, and then dualism, which Ayer specifically intends sense-data to avoid.

A charge of "illegitimacy" if not of "metaphysicality" must also be made against the standards upon which Ayer expects us to judge "reality". To use Ayer's terms,² the most reliable data in predicting the course of our sensory experience are given priority, and those of considerable dependability are taken as constituting "real" objects, as opposed to "illusory" ones. These criteria may be seen as imported norms which are just as legitimate as any other group of norms incorporated without justification into a system. If this is what they amount to--and I can see no arguments to indicate that they should be taken as anything more than this, put forward anywhere in Ayer's work--then I see no ob-

¹ Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, Second Edition, with a new Introduction by the author, New York, Dover Publications, 1946, p. 33.

² Ayer, Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, p. 267.

jection to the importation of many more normative principles, so that, for instance, beauty would be on the same footing with reality, moral judgments not different in kind from empirical claims.

If, as Ayer does, one attempts to base the criteria (reliability in prediction of future sense experience) on an instinct common to all men, the clarification of this justification makes its inadequacies clear, for: either this is an empirical claim (which would be upset by one counter-example, and could never be conclusively demonstrated), in which case the justification of the role of the criteria in epistemology is itself dependent for its plausibility on the application to its own case of the very criteria it purports to substantiate; or else it is an a priori statement about the nature of men, or of the limits of knowledge, in which case, for Ayer at any rate, it must be trivially true and not a proper basis for his epistemological claims. [I mean by this latter that a statement like: "There is instinct common to all men which drives them to seek reliability in prediction of sense experiences," if not empirical, must mean that any candidate for manhood who lacked this instinct would by definition not qualify as a 'man'. The sort of a priori claim which would be a possible basis for the subsequent claims about what in experience can be treated as part of the real world, would, on the other hand, be an interpretation of the statement in this sort of direction: "Anything

which is both man and lacks the instinct to seek reliability in sense perceptions cannot logically be conceived of as capable of any experience." Ayer does not consider this sort of claim.]

There are also problems in connection with the notion of 'logical construction'. Mine are not the familiar objections, for they center around the character of the sense-data. It is usual to treat separately the questions about logical construction and the questions about the character of sense-data, while I suspect that the possibility of the construction is presupposed by the character of the data and their derivation. My arguments are intended to show that the construction is unacceptable because I find the derivation of certain aspects of the sense-data unconvincing.

Ayer often presents sense-data in language that indicates the sort of separation that marks off the statements about sense-data from the statements about material objects. The sense-data talk is talk about qualities associated with objects:¹ a patch of green, a whiff of cinnamon. Ayer is careful not to let us take him as suggesting that these are "objects" either in the sense of "material object" or in the sense of "object of (distinct from) consciousness". He also

¹ A particular has not traditionally been taken to be a quality, or vice versa. It is an interesting feature of the sense-datum theory that a patch of yellow is an irreducible particular, while an ordinary object is a kind of construction. One might expect the quality to be a universal, and the object a particular.

makes clear his contention that sense-datum talk is imperfectly translatable into material object talk, since the certainty involved in reporting that: "Such-and-such sense-data are in so-and-so relationships," is not present in the "equivalent" material object report, "I see a chair to my right." The latter is a disguised commitment to the repeatability of the experience, which is not part of the commitment of the former statement. The sense-data talk describes the contingent, the material object talk adds a dimension of the human hope that the world be rational, consistent, explicable. These are two ways of talking, then, the former often helping to make clear the nature of the latter, though not being equivalent to it. The difference is specifically illustrated by the fact that a carpet may or may not be yellow, though I see it as yellow, while the sense-datum is yellow (in the sense of identity, not of attribution), and that cannot be doubted.¹ One might suspect that Ayer's sense-data are the qualities one "abstracts" from objects, and from which one "constructs objects", and I want to make a point to the effect that consistent sense-data talk involves a confusion--a confusion which not only renders the talk inaccurate, but, if left unexposed, adds a critical dimension to the plausibility of the relation between sense-data talk and material object talk.

¹ See The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, p. 69.

We seldom make statements claiming to have experienced (seen, tasted, heard, etc.) a sensible quality. It is true even of the most disembodied ("secondary") qualities that we most frequently speak of tasting cinnamon, or of smelling a rose, as though there were an object, not just the quality, involved in our experience. Ayer recommends an artificial language which involves serious deviation from the way we most frequently speak, and which does not carry these implications. But how consistent is it to speak of experiencing just a quality? A language in which one speaks of a sensation of yellow is one which not only does violence to ordinary language (which is all right under appropriate circumstances), but to the concepts of sense and quality as well. What can be made of the conception of "qualities apart from the objects to which they belong"?

"If you take away from the apple its redness", is a mode of expression not unfamiliar in philosophy. (It is found, for instance, in such epistemological instructions as, "take away the qualities and what have you left? Substance? Nonsense, there is no more to an object than the sum of its qualities.") The general form of the statement might be: "Abstract from the object its qualities." An instantiation might be: "Abstract from an apple its roundness." In what ways may we make this latter more precise? I shall suggest several formulations (F_1 , F_2 , etc.) of such a locution.

F₁ "Consider the shape without thinking of the further qualities of the apple."

This is certainly easy. The shape can be reproduced on paper, duplicated or distorted, with no thought of the apple from which it first came. There is no limit to the number of people who can abstract the shape from the apple in this way, nor to the number of times the apple may "have its shape taken away". Thus it is that a quality may be abstracted from an object. It must be noted that the apple has not been impoverished in any way. If you take away a leg from Burns, then Burns is minus a leg. The apple may have its shape taken away innumerable times in this fashion, but have lost nothing. The importance of this point should be made clear by the following alternative formulation of the original statement:

F₂ "Consider the apple without its shape."

How is one to make sense of this sentence? I might speak of a pear-shaped apple as one which lacked its proper apple-shape; I might even speak of a particularly nondescript and lumpy apple as a "shapeless" one. But I would not be in any better a position than before to argue that something could be an apple with no shape at all. And yet it is somehow, and frequently, construed that from the possibility of abstracting a quality from an object, and from the impossibility of conceiving an object apart from its qualities, both that there is nothing more (in-itself) to the object than

the collection of its qualities (with which I do not now quarrel), and (for phenomenologists, at any rate) that the "object" is really a construction out of those qualities.

Perhaps I am taking a prejudiced view of the case by examining a "primary" quality. Let me describe a variation of 'F₂' using a more controversial quality: colour.

F₃ "Consider the apple without its redness."

In one sense this is quite possible. I can contemplate (or even imagine, picture, consider as more than a logical possibility) an albino apple, for instance, or a green apple, or a peeled apple. But I have not, then, an apple impoverished by one attribute. I simply have an albino (green, peeled) apple. That is all. Perhaps I could arrange to have a model of an apple done in transparent plastic. This would be a different object, but not one lacking a quality--not impoverished.

The quality, then, can be treated apart from the object, and the object from the quality, but not in the transitive sense that would leave the apple minus that quality so that not only could the quality be considered in isolation qua quality, but the object, too, could be considered qua object-minus-one-attribute. If to take away a quality is not to impoverish an object, then to put together such abstracted qualities cannot be to rebuild an object. If sense-data are qualities-of-particular-objects in this sense, then I cannot be happy about (re)constructing objects from them.

If, on the other hand, we assume that the processes of abstracting qualities and constructing objects do go on--that with the qualities of an object taken as independent data one can make clear all there is to say about an object--then it must be true that from an apple the qualities might be abstracted and a second apple constructed from them, then the qualities of that apple abstracted and a third apple constructed, and so on, ad infinitum (and so ad absurdum). On these grounds, I see no reasonable defense for Ayer's talk about our basic experiences being of independent, simple qualities, sense-contents or sense-data, and of objects being constructed from them.

* * *

PART 3: Objection: 'Consciousness'.

I am concerned both about Ayer's model of consciousness and his version of incorrigibility. The two issues are closely related. Their immediate implications are distinct, however, and I shall deal with them separately. Ayer would say, I suppose, that my attack on Austin's difficulty with the notion of "apprehension by inspection merely" depended on my commitment to a model of experience ("apprehension") in which there is a conscious subject having an experience of a separate object. Given this model, or this mode of language, I am quite right to say that Austin has not

described a case of 'experience'. But it is not necessary to adopt this model, Ayer claims, and he recommends that it not be adopted.

The notion of a conscious, experiencing subject has a contentious place in epistemology. In any theory of empirical knowledge the subject is the source of many problems. Yet he must be accounted for as the receiver of data from the world of external "real objects of experience". (The final expression is designed to include rainbows, mirror images, and the other assorted candidates for experiencing which, as Austin points out, do not quite fit under the rubric of "material objects".) The constantly-present problems centre on one issue--the compatibility of the following two aspects of the analysis of empirical knowledge. On the one hand, only that which is objective can be the content of true statements. The validity of such statements depends not on the subject but on the state of affairs in the world. If things are the way they are said to be then the claim is true. What counts is the external, objective, independent facts. On the other hand, the statements about the facts are invariably made by a subject. The subject invariably organizes, structures, modifies, even colours his experience or his description of the facts. The creative interpreter is constantly interfering with the possibility of directly reflecting the external world. There must be a bridge between the two, yet it is not clear how it must be explained that the

subject can be conscious of the object, that there can be knowledge of the external world.

The subject, then, is the topic of this part of the thesis. It is the subject as opposed to the object (of its consciousness) that concerns us. The 'subject' in the 'subject/predicate' distinction is equally relevant to the problems of this paper, and was a central concern of the discussion of names and descriptions in Chapter I, for instance, but the 'subject/object' distinction is prior to distinctions within the notion of 'object', nonetheless.

Descartes is one of Ayer's favourite case studies.¹ The scepticism of Descartes is grounded in the occurrence of illusion, and he wishes, as does Ayer, to find an indubitable basis for knowledge. A distinction cannot even be maintained between them on the claim that, unlike Descartes (whose indubitable is analytic), Ayer wants his indubitable element to be empirical. In an important sense Ayer's sense-data are not the contents of empirical observation, but are what they are necessarily, or by definition. But Ayer does point out a crucial difference between Descartes and himself on these issues. The cogito, he claims, asserts more than it proves.²

¹ See especially The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, pp. 36-46, and The Problem of Knowledge, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1940, pp. 44-46.

² That this is all based on Ayer's, not necessarily Descartes', version of what Descartes is doing, does not raise any problems relevant to the discussion.

It is an interesting logical truth that, "If I think, then I exist," and it is not likely that any utterance of, "There is some thinking going on," would be false. It is, on the other hand, quite extravagant to claim, "I think, therefore I am," and to consider this undeniable. It is only true because the "I" is assumed from the outset. The "I am" follows from the "I think", but the "I" of the latter is an assumption which is nowhere justified. Though Descartes claimed to have a solution to his stated problem, a basis from which a sound analysis of our knowledge of the external world could be developed, Ayer shows that he only managed to pose the central problem for modern epistemologies: that if the cogito is indubitable then there is no escaping the substantial duality of res extensa and res cogitans, and the subject/object relation in experience and cognition is always present, but it constitutes a gap which is difficult to bridge. Similarly, anyone who analyses the datum of primary sense experience as the object of a subject's experience, "I see a red patch, (therefore I am)," makes the same sort of assumption and inherits the same set of problems. Ayer strives ingeniously to redefine the nature of elementary awareness, and to avoid these problems.

Ayer wants to say that sense-data are neither known nor not-known--they are not possible objects of knowledge, and thus cannot be dubitable. They cannot be indubitable either. They just are. They occur. Their "incorrigibility", then,

(in the special sense Ayer gives it),¹ is an intimate part of the description of the nature of their apprehension. He calls this apprehension "awareness", to distinguish it from "perception" (of objects), and "knowledge" (of propositions).² It is clear from what has been said that the perception of objects, or judgments of perception at least, claim more than is contained in the experiences (awareness) which gave rise to them. They are corrigible judgments by a subject. Now our immediate problem is to expose the content of the given experiences, that which is contained in the awareness of sense-data. But first it is worth noting Ayer's analysis of the range of issues which his insight embraces, and the number of problems his resolution of the gap between the data of experience and the claims to knowledge will eliminate:

Assuming the problem not to be illusory, it takes its place among a set of philosophical problems which, though superficially dissimilar, exhibit a common pattern. In every case the data which are available to us appear to fall short in some uncompromising way of the conclusion which we hope to reach; the problem is to remove or bridge the gap. Thus, the apparent difficulty of passing to physical objects from sense-data is paralleled by the difficulty of passing from present experiences to past events, by the difficulty of inferring what goes on in other people's minds from their observable behaviour, and by the problem of induction, the passage from statements of fact to statements of law. These problems are interconnected in the sense that the solution of one of them may be taken for granted in the formulation of another. In raising the problem of other people's minds, we take for granted that we can observe their bodies; in deal-

¹ Ayer, The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, pp. 61 ff.

² Ibid., p. 79.

ing with the problem of induction we credit ourselves with knowledge of past events. Thus the level of what we count as data varies, but the difficulty of advancing beyond the data presents very much the same aspect in each case.¹

Before Ayer can clarify these problems he must show how an 'unconscious awareness' is to be made sense of. That it is odd to speak of awareness or experience as a happening or occurrence, and not as someone's awareness or experience of something, is grounds for an Austinian suspicion that Ayer will prove to be wrong, but this does not upset Ayer. I do think it is possible to argue that Ayer's model of awareness cannot be reconciled with what usually belongs to the concept of 'consciousness', and so must be less than consciousness (although none of the usual states which fall into this category--unreflective consciousness, unself-conscious awareness, dreaming, sub-conscious awareness, unconscious (?) awareness--are the least bit more assimilable to the occurrence model than is consciousness itself.) The argument I most want to develop, however, takes the form of a dilemma. It is a dilemma which arises when the metaphysicality of the sense-datum is clearly established. Sense-data, the ground of empirical knowledge, are also what there is. They are claimed to exist prior to categories, to space and time, to concepts of existence, and out of them emerges the experience of both self and world, the construction of the world

¹ Ayer, "Perception", British Philosophy in the Mid-century, C.A. Mace (ed.), London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957, pp. 222-223.

of perception, and the subsequent theories about empirical knowledge and about the theoreticians. This sounds incredibly woolly, but something of this order appears to be the nature of sense-data, unless we admit that the sense-data are had by somebody. The horns of the dilemma are these: either the sense-datum is prior to and independent of the concepts of 'body' and 'being had by a subject'; or the sense-datum is entertained or had by, or takes place in, a subject--at least a human body (to leave out, rather than to beg, the question of animal perception). I shall try to show that both these alternatives, when consistently pursued, lead to untenable conclusions. Further, I do not see how the argument could be avoided. The sense-datum must either occur in a subject or not in a subject. Nor does the question of where and under what circumstances the sense-datum occurs seem to me to be an irrelevant question. There is indeed a sense in which Ayer wants to say that such questions cannot arise, such distinctions cannot be made, before the sense-data have adopted order enough for one to construct subject/object distinctions, etc., but this is surely not to rule against the theoretician's right and ability to ask his questions. Such a rule would also rule out Ayer's right and ability to give his answers. The first possibility, seen closely, seems to require some preliminary discussion (occupying sections (a) and (b)), before I show that it is untenable (section (c)).

EITHER: the sense-datum occurs independently of and prior to the subject or observer;

(a) This does not seem a plausible version of Ayer's intentions because to speak of the sense-datum as independent of the observer suggests that it has the status of an object, that it is one of the "new kinds of material thing" which Ayer specifically rejects.¹ Furthermore, it is the first datum or evidence that one has on which to base claims to empirical knowledge, it is data one cannot doubt, and so on, all of which indicates that there are sentient and language-using beings before there are sense-data, and that the sense-datum occurs to such a being.

(b) On the other hand, the case for the "either" is made plausible by these observations. The reason sense-data are not to be considered objects independent of the observer of them, that for them to be is to be perceived, is that they are not the objects (in a somewhat different sense) of an observer's perception but precede the very possibility of so speaking. There are a lot of sense-data through the mill, one might say, before it is possible to construct regular examples of objects and of the self-as-observer, and these concepts are not ones appropriate to a description of sense-data. Sense-data, then, are prior to body and observer--they are not data that I have.

¹ Ibid., p. 70.

(c) If it is the case that the sense-data are of such a nature then it becomes impossible to explain several things which are necessary to Ayer's account of the perception of things in the world. If there is no-one having the sense-datum then there is no-one to note the resemblance holding among a group or succession of data and enabling one to call it an object; there is no-one to judge the similarity of environment, or able to note the systematic reproducibility of the arrangements of data; there is no-one, in short, to construct the external world from sense-data, and there is no-one in whom resides (or who could be characterized by) the animal passions or natural instinct which make us seek the continuity and predictability that guides our construction of the world. It makes no sense to expect such independent sense-data to account for the world by themselves, yet that is just what is expected of them on this view. Ayer would not likely have wished this version of the nature or status of sense-data to be taken as his. It is certainly untenable, as becomes clear after a modicum of examination.

OR: the sense-datum is entertained or had by, or takes place in, a human subject.

If this is the case, and it seems probable that at least part of the time Ayer will insist that this is the case (e.g., to support the claims in section (a) of 'either'), then it really must be allowed that I speak of my experiencing them; even if they are incorrigible it must be allowable that I am

noticing these adventitious data; and it must be a reasonable possibility that I can say--whatever my further description of myself may include--that whenever "there is some thinking going on" (or, e.g., some occurrence of sense-data), either I am aware of the content (hence the legitimacy of the cogito, the 'I' is not introduced without grounds), or I am not--in which case there is no sense-datum after all, since for it to exist it must be perceived.

This is not the same thing as saying that experience by definition is subjective activity with an object, and that therefore there is always an 'I' involved in primitive experience. That, of course, is tautological. I have allowed the sense-datum to be a subjectless, objectless, actless moment of awareness, and have argued that if it is thought to occur apart from any person, then the rest of Ayer's explanation of our knowledge of the external world is incomprehensible, and that if it is allowed to occur to, or in conjunction with, a being capable of noticing regularities, etc., then there will still arise the problem of the subject who notices the sense-datum's occurrence.

This does suggest an infinite regress. I do not think it necessarily a vicious one; in other words, although there can always be asked a further question about the being who is conscious of being conscious of a datum, and so on, this question does not need to be asked, past a certain point it fails to be illuminating, while not to ask it in the first

instance (to speak of a sense-datum as something which can be the basis of comparison and construction and empirical knowledge while not being had by a being able to use it in such a way) is to overlook the inconsistencies in such a version of the nature of a sense-datum. It is untenable whether the sense-datum is thought of as separate from the subject (as in 'either'), or as present in the subject but not noticed, observed, inspected, and so on, by him (which is as much as to say that he does not know it exists).¹

This section may be concluded, then, with the claim that on Ayer's model of consciousness sense-data are either extra-personal (quite prior to and separate from a sentient being), or not noticed (had by a person or occurring within him, but without his being informed of it at all). Neither formulation is satisfactory. It is suggested, on the other hand, that a sense-datum (and I use the term loosely, now, for I tend to agree with Austin that what I basically see are tables and chairs, etc., and that Ayer's data are the result of complex analysis of the basic content of experience--rather than the other way around, but be it a table or a red patch we may say that a sense-content) is always something

¹ It is instructive to compare B.A. Farrell here: "Experience", Mind, 1950, reprinted in V.C. Chappell (ed.), The Philosophy of Mind, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1962, pp. 23 ff. Farrell discusses "raw feels"--the experience itself, apart from neural activity and behavioural reactions, which bothers the physiologist and psychologist--and in this context uses arguments somewhat similar to mine to show that "raw feel" is an empty concept.

that I can get hold of, can notice, can pick out, can make observations about, and can make mistakes about.

It may still be possible, however, that although the model of consciousness proves unsatisfactory, the incorrigibility of the data I experience may still be defended. It should be dealt with separately, in any case.

* * *

PART 4: Objection: 'Incorrigibility'.

The pursuit of the incorrigible is one of the most venerable bugbears in the history of philosophy.... In a nutshell, the doctrine about knowledge, "empirical" knowledge, is that it has foundations.... To find the data, the foundations, look for the incorrigible.... In fact sense-data make up the whole of "our resources".¹

There are several things which need to be said about Ayer's version of the sense-datum as the directly and indubitably known foundation of empirical knowledge. I shall say six things [(a) to (f)] which, I think, taken together fully characterize this aspect of Ayer's position. Then I shall say four things [A to D] which I take to be arguments against the tenability of that position, before concluding this chapter. Here, then, are the six Features of the Position:

¹ Austin, Sense and Sensibilia, pp. 104-107. Cf. Ayer, The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, Chapter V, especially p. 243.

(a) The experience of sense-data is not open to doubt. The awareness of sense-data is not a form of knowing,¹ and the term "awareness" distinguishes it from "perception" (of material objects), and from "knowledge" (in its propositional sense). What may be called "knowledge by acquaintance" is "direct awareness" of particular things; it is to be contrasted with "propositional knowledge". The former expresses the experience of sense-data, which depend for their existence on being perceived. The latter does presuppose the independence of its object--its truth does not depend on our knowing it. This knowledge is sometimes called "knowledge that", or "knowledge by description".² Such knowledge is "indirect" and corrigible. Since the awareness of sense-data is not this kind of knowledge (not "knowledge" at all in Ayer's recommended use of the term), it is not subject to the same weaknesses. There is no doubt about appearances--sense-data--for they are as they appear.

(b) There is indubitable propositional knowledge based on sense-data. "For the meaning of the expression 'direct awareness' is such that, whenever we are directly aware of a sense-datum, it follows that we know some proposition which describes the sense-datum to be true....Our belief in the truth of such a proposition...could not conceivably be mistaken."³

¹ Ayer, The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, p. 78.

² The distinction is Russell's: "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1910-11, p. 108.

³ Ayer, The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, p. 80.

(c) The only possible error in such propositional knowledge is verbal. Errors of fact cannot be made about sense-data, which are as they appear to be. "If one uses a sentence such as, "This is green," merely to designate a present sense-datum, then no proposition is being asserted to the truth of which any further evidence would be relevant."¹ The only entertainable doubt would be about whether "green" is the correct word to use. These propositions, then, are indubitable, "on the ground that it is not significant to say that one doubts them in any other but a purely verbal sense."²

(d) Such propositions contain a range of predicates and relations. The knowledge-that which one claims with certainty about one's sense-data is extensive, for many informations are given in the sense-datum. For example: "The extension and figure of a visual sense-datum are sensibly 'given' no less than its colour; and so are its spatial relations to other sense-data within the same visual field."³

(e) Such propositions do not refer to relations not presently experienced. In important conjunction with (d) this characteristic completes the delimitation of certain knowledge, and indicates the source of error. If I use a proposition merely to designate or describe a present sense-datum and do not imply "that it is in any way related to

¹ Ibid., p. 83.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 246.

anything that I am not simultaneously experiencing", then there is no possibility of my being mistaken (except as in (c)).¹ The possibility of my being mistaken, then, only exists when my judgment goes beyond the immediate awareness, judges relations not presently experienced, and engages, for instance, in the "construction" of material objects. "It connects an experienced sense-datum with other possible sense-data which are not simultaneously given, and in doing so it allows room for doubt and error."²

(f) Sense-data and the certain propositions about them are the basis of empirical knowledge. They are the evidence upon which further judgments are immediately based. Sense-data are the "resources" from which we construct the material world.³

Now that the case has been stated in some detail its inadequacies remain to be articulated.

A. My first argument is one taken from A.M. Quinton.⁴ It appears to be the claim of anyone who would base knowledge on statements made about sense-data that it is the case that we are acquainted with our experience (as distinct from objects) as a general rule. That is, we are said to be de-

¹ Ibid., p. 81.

² Ibid., p. 82.

³ Ibid., p. 243.

⁴ A.M. Quinton, "The Problem of Perception", reprinted in Robert J. Swartz (ed.), Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing, Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books, 1965, p. 497. This is a very pertinent article, and I have found it supporting my arguments at several points, and with enviable lucidity.

scribing, or making observations about, our visual experience when we describe what we are seeing. On the contrary, it is argued by Quinton, we do nothing of the kind, or only very rarely and in extreme cases.

As we come round from an anaesthetic for example, a description of our visual experience is a possible answer to the question 'can you see anything?' But it is worth noticing that in such cases we can also say, with even better warrant perhaps, 'no, just a lot of yellow streaks' instead of 'yes, a lot of yellow streaks'. Only in a very marginal sense is a description of one's visual experience to be called 'seeing' at all.¹

This point is made in conjunction with another to the effect that when I am wrong about what I am seeing (i.e., in cases of illusion), either I am not seeing anything, but only think I am (MacBeth's dagger), or I am seeing something else than what I think I am ("If I take a piece of mud on the doormat to be a letter, it will be said that what I actually saw was a piece of mud."²). This is, of course, similar to points made by Austin at great length. Quinton's conclusion is that in general I am not in a position to see my visual experience, or to describe it as an answer to the question, "What do you see?" To take visual and other sense-data as the content of our consciousness in cases of experiencing, and to take descriptive statements about them as the basis of empirical knowledge, is in effect to build on a foundation which is rarely present.

¹ Ibid., p. 508.

² Ibid., p. 507.

This may be taken in at least two ways. It might, firstly, be an ordinary language point, showing that describing or being able to describe one's sense-data, as opposed to what one does (or thinks one does) see, is not the sort of language move one makes in replying to questions about what one is experiencing. To this Ayer should be expected to answer that he expects to be contradicting ordinary language. He is making linguistic recommendations. These are intended to be helpful and more accurate in the handling of certain problems, but not to accord to "standard use" at all, (nor, however, to represent a dispute about the facts, about what is experienced).¹ It is worth noting that G.A. Paul whose contribution to a Symposium of the Aristotelian Society in 1936² is a classic refutation of standard sense-data theories, argues two cases (among others) which are: (a) Sense-data theorists are not proposing hypotheses which are subject to empirical confirmation or refutation, but are recommending new verbal uses (whether they have been clear about this themselves or not), and (b) the new verbal uses

¹ One of the encouraging things about recommendations which do not claim to be saying that things are not what you took them to be, is that they can be rejected out of hand with equanimity. Austin is only reflecting Ayer's conviction that what he has to say is more worthwhile than a gratuitous recommendation when he claims that the "official doctrine", or the two languages theory--sense-datum language being the recommended equivalent to the usual language--is superstructural, and hides basic metaphysical claims about which Ayer is either embarrassed or has deluded himself. (See, e.g., Sense and Sensibilia, pp. 106-107.)

² G.A. Paul, "Is There a Problem About Sense-Data?", reprinted in Swartz, op. cit., p. 271.

are not as useful as they are made out to be.

I do not wish to deny that there is any sense in which this terminology is nearer to reality than any other which may be used to express the same facts; in particular I wish to deny that in order to give a complete and accurate account of any perceptual situation it is necessary to use a noun in the way in which 'sense-datum' is used.¹

Ayer is quite efficient at noting (a)², and at managing to overlook (b) completely.

Secondly, Quinton's point may be taken to be more than a stressing of what we should say when, and in fact to amount to a claim backed by phenomenological theories of perception that we experience objects, etc., not sense-data, and that any marginal case examination of sense-data will hardly be the sort of thing on which one wants to base all empirical knowledge. Some of the issues in this case will be discussed in later sections.

B. In (a) of the statement of Ayer's case the importance of the distinction between knowledge-by-acquaintance and knowledge-by-description for this argument was indicated. I want to argue that knowledge-by-acquaintance is not different in kind from knowledge-that (or knowledge-by-description) for the purposes of this case. Above all, I shall insist that there is no distinction which can be marked by pointing to the fact that the one form of knowledge is re-

¹ Ibid., p. 279.

² See, for instance, The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, p. 25.

putedly incorrigible and the other not. Acquaintance-knowledge is a form of shorthand to express one's claim to a certain quantity of propositional knowledge. (I say that I know Peter if and only if I know several things that are true about him--enough things, say, that I could recognize him in an ordinary situation, but not necessarily enough things about him that I would recommend him for a scholarship.) That is the case I shall maintain.

Several differences between knowledge-by-acquaintance and knowledge-that are usually pointed to as indications that they cannot be lumped together, and as a hint that they will likely turn out to be quite different in terms of their nature, methods, validation and illocutionary force. Take the illocutionary force, for example. If we consider an example of knowledge-that and one of knowledge-by-acquaintance we should find that they are quite different with respect to their illocutionary aspects. When I say that I know the key signature of Beethoven's First Symphony, I am not likely claiming knowledge-by-acquaintance--that would be an unusual case indeed. Probably I am claiming that the symphony is written in the key of C major. I am claiming that my proposition is true, and I am guaranteeing its validity with my authority, and so on. On the other hand, when I say that I know (am acquainted with) Bavarian beer I am not claiming that anything is true, nor is the object of my knowledge something independent of me which can be known by others on

the basis of my authority. Thus we see that in these terms knowing-by-acquaintance and knowing-that are distinguishable. But the distinction is not so easy to maintain. If we make the acquaintance claim more precise it will be seen that it indeed comprises certain claims 'that'. I claim that I can name some Bavarian brands, or that I can remember drinking a Bavarian beer on a certain occasion, or that I could recognize a Bavarian beer in a group of various different kinds of beer, and so on. These claims could be tested, and I give my authority to you that they are true. Furthermore, I may often be wrong in my claims, in which case you are justified in saying, "You don't really know X at all, do you." Knowledge-by-acquaintance is no more incorrigible than knowledge-that.

Another obvious difference between the two cases is illustrated by phrases like: "I only know him to say hello", "I know her rather well", "I know Vancouver a little". Knowledge-that is never partial or qualified in such ways. Either I know or I do not know. Thus, inadequacy and incompleteness are quite compatible with knowing-by-acquaintance, but knowing-that is complete and adequate in itself. We find inadequacies in acquaintance-knowledge which are expressed as ignorance of further acquaintance-knowledge.

1. Yes, I know Toronto rather well--born and raised there. (acquaintance)
2. Then you must know the Bluffs at Stop 17. (acquaintance) No, I lived in the west end.

or the standard case:

2a. Then you must know my old friend, Harry.

This (1.) is a claim to knowledge qualified by an admission that the knowledge is not fully sufficient. But how is this different from the knowledge-that which is involved in:

1. Do you know Spinoza's birthdate? -Yes, 1632.

2. But anybody would know that, I want to know that he was born on such-and-such a day and month in 1632.

Here my first claim to knowledge is quite permissable. It is not adequate enough or specific enough for the present context, that is all. Similarly my claim to know Toronto was not incorrect, but I was unable to be specific enough. Knowledge-that and acquaintance-knowledge do not differ in this regard.

Notice, again, that the partiality of acquaintance-knowledge can also be the result of a lack of knowledge-that:

1. Yes, I know (am acquainted with) Being and Nothingness.

2. Did you know (that) it was out in paperback?
-No, is it indeed?

It is clearly knowledge-that which is lacking in this case, and which constitutes the basis for our saying that the acquaintance-knowledge is incomplete. If I knew something only a little bit then I would know only a few, or perhaps some unimportant, propositions to be the case. I might know that Sally had blonde hair last time I saw her, and that she tends to wear heavy sweaters and full skirts. I probably

remember her face in some detail. With these bits of knowledge-that I should on most ordinary occasions be able to recognize her. When told that she is engaged to a sociologist, however, I may not know enough about her to say whether that seemed a good idea or not. "I may not know enough about her", (knowledge-that) is a precise equivalent of "I may not know her well enough", (acquaintance-knowledge) in this context. If I were to know someone or something quite well, on the other hand, that would mean that I had at my command a much more complete, or more essential, set of things known (knowledge-that). If I were to make this sort of claim, it would be because I should know much more about the subject than someone who could only claim to know the thing in passing.

To claim that the one kind of knowing is direct and the other kind of knowing indirect is to assert something which quite clearly is not going to separate these knowings in any crucial manner. If knowing directly is taken to mean that I have seen, heard, etc., the object itself, and knowing indirectly means that I have heard about it from others, and so forth, then it must be admitted that I can conceive of indirect acquaintance-knowledge ("I haven't read your book yet, Mr. Donovan, but my friends speak of it so often that already I know it quite well."), and direct knowledge-that ("I know that my new car is red and yellow; I'm looking right at it."). This is useful and comprehensible as a distinction which helps

to separate knowing-that and acquaintance-knowledge for some purposes, but it is hardly the mark of a radical distinction. Nor can I imagine a more exciting but still tenable application of the 'direct/indirect' labelling.

My conclusions from these observations are that acquaintance-knowledge is a blanket claim to a group of known propositions (probably in conjunction with some knowledge-how--as in knowing how to (being able to) recognize a person without being able to list the features one was looking for, exactly--but I consider this an extraneous issue¹), and that what seem to be radical differences separating it from propositional knowledge depend to a large extent on the fact that to know something well (by acquaintance) is to know a lot about that thing (knowledge-that), and similarly, mutatis mutandis, for knowing a little, etc. Further, I do not see grounds in the distinction which remains for claiming that the one kind of knowledge is direct, the other indirect, nor that the one is incorrigible and the other subject to error.

¹ Cf. Gilbert Ryle's discussion of this distinction in The Concept of Mind, New York, Barnes and Noble, 1949, in particular, pp. 27-32. That this distinction is not as clear as it is often wished to be is indicated by this example. Knowing how to drive a car includes knowing that the clutch must be depressed before the gear-shift lever is to be engaged, and a lot of other such knowledge-that. On the other hand, that one drives a car without actually working out the rules of each action ahead of time (or even without being able to articulate them at all), is certainly true (or possible), and separates the how from the that.

What Ayer is attempting to do amounts to saying that our awareness of sense-data is (like) acquaintance-knowledge (incorrigible, direct, and not propositional). I am rejecting, then, at least (a) of the outline of his case, by demonstrating the role of knowledge-that in any case of knowledge-by-acquaintance. That this sort of awareness of sense-data can exist as a separate occurrence, and that certain propositional knowledge(that) can then be asserted about this awareness, seems to me to be quite an inaccurate way to speak of these issues in epistemology.

Quinton again seems to support my case when he asks, "Can having an experience and being aware of it be clearly distinguished in this way?"¹ That is, although it may be true in some sense that we have sense-data in every perceptual situation, this is "quite another matter from being aware of them, noticing them, being in a position to describe them; and nothing less than this can be involved in the claim of the sense-datum theory that it is our experience which we really perceive"² and that this is the basis of our claims to knowledge. "One cannot be aware of something without knowing something about it, being aware that something is the case."³

C. But let me grant Ayer the first point (a), and discuss his (b) and (c). He is willing to admit that the

¹ Quinton, op. cit., p. 509.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 510.

occurrence of sense-data is not sufficient as an explanation of the basis of our further empirical knowledge, and it is to handle this sort of problem that Ayer points out that in every case of my experiencing a sense-datum, I also know some proposition describing the sense-datum to be true. But this is to blur the difference between the occurrence of an experience, and my describing the experience. Knowledge cannot be based on an occurrence, and descriptive propositions need to be introduced as the basis of further knowledge, but Ayer must have the two directly connected in order that the simple occurrence of the sense-datum invest the descriptive proposition with its incorrigibility. This confusion between an occurrence and its description "is responsible for the view that simply to have an experience is to know it for what it is." Quinton continues:

Those who have, consistently enough, denied that experience as such is properly speaking either a kind of knowledge or true or false at all, have avoided the confusion at the cost of abolishing their problem. For from mere events nothing can be logically derived; only from statements, from what can be known to be true, can other statements be inferred.¹

This may be restated in the form of dilemma. Either sense-data are non-cognitive occurrences which by themselves cannot be the basis of any sort of cognition, cannot be a starting point for empirical knowledge, or else they occur as cognitive elements, and can support further knowledge, but must forfeit their immediacy, their direct and un-judged being-what-they-are.

¹ Ibid., p. 518.

Other things may be said to defend Ayer's direct relationship between data and propositions. There is, for instance, the claim that only verbal, never factual, slips can be made in the descriptions of sense-data. Here, I am persuaded by the standard argument that any factual proposition involves the attribution of properties or relations--and thus involves classification of what is being described. But the things (or experiences) being described do not confront us already classified. We have to classify them; this is something we have to learn to do, and this is something in doing which we can make mistakes.¹ There is a gap, then, between sense-data and propositions about them, and such propositions cannot be certain. The errors thus made are hardly verbal ones. They can be misjudgments, not slips of the tongue. That is to say, not knowing whether to call something "green" is frequently not just a verbal problem. It can be a serious problem of conceptual judgment, and when I am wrong I have made a mistake, not a slip. If I quote at length from Quinton it will make this point as clear as possible:

¹ Cf. Austin's argument in "Other Minds", op. cit., p. 51n2. "Misnaming is not a trivial or laughing matter. If I misname I shall mislead others, and I shall also misunderstand information given by others to me. 'Of course I knew all about his condition perfectly, but I never realized that was diabetes: I thought it was cancer, and all the books agree that's incurable: if I'd only known it was diabetes, I should have thought of insulin at once.' Knowing what a thing is is, to an important extent, knowing what the name for it, and the right name for it, is." Quinton also remarks similarly, op. cit., p. 516.

Professor Ayer has recently argued that experience is described 'not by relating it to anything else but by indicating that a certain word applies to it in virtue of a meaning-rule of the language'. The suggestion is that the application of meaning-rules is such a simple matter that it is impossible to perform it wrongly except by a slip. But meaning-rules do not have the bemusing simplicity of their 'semantic' formulation (the word 'red' applies to red things). The class of things to which a predicate applies is indeterminately bounded. Some blue things are more obviously blue than others. Again we are not equally and perfectly accomplished in the application of all predicates. We can manage 'red' and 'round' fairly well, but are less efficient with 'mauve' and 'rhomboidal'.¹

Describing sense-data, then, is an activity which is corrigible. Just as the direct awareness of sense-data was found to be an inadequate concept, so it does not follow that a description of a sense-datum is a certain (unerroneous) proposition.

The most adequate summing-up of this argument which I can imagine is Ayer's own. In The Problem of Knowledge, in a section called, "Are Mistakes about one's own Immediate Experience only Verbal?"² Ayer says with charming candour that some philosophers have been misled into holding that at least some statements which "refer to what is immediately given to us in experience must be incorrigible...., (but) if I am right, there is no class of descriptive statements which are incorrigible."³ This explicitly refutes his own earlier position in Foundations, and on this point he and I are in full agreement.

¹ Quinton, op. cit., p. 517. Cf. Austin on 'Magenta', in Sense and Sensibilia, pp. 112-113.

² Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge, pp. 61-68.

³ Ibid., pp. 62-63.

D. Ayer also argues that sense-data have properties as outlined in (d), and qualified in (e). It is necessary that sense-data have properties as outlined in order that propositions about them will be possible and that further knowledge may subsequently be based on them. This explains (d). But, as Paul said, they are curious experiences indeed "which can 'have' sensible properties but cannot 'appear to have' sensible properties which they have not got."¹ But Ayer wants to say just this about them, and that is the purpose of (e), which eliminates from sense-data the sorts of properties about which mistaken judgments are made, e.g., in connecting the given with possible sense-data not presently given. This move is not sufficient for its intended goal: it does not allow for the fact that descriptions are made by me, not given to me; nor for the fact that (as I argued in Chapter I) in order to have an experience at all it must be distinguishable from what goes before it and comes after it. In order to know descriptive propositions about sense-data it is necessary to note (some of) their properties, and that involves ascertaining how they appear. Ayer gets into trouble when he suggests that a sense-datum can have a given appearance which is apprehended directly. Paul is right to find something odd in the notion of having properties while not being able to appear to have other properties.

¹ Paul, op. cit., p. 279.

This point may be stated as a dilemma, viz.: Either a sense-datum has features, has properties, stands in relations, etc., and can be experienced, categorized and described, but in which case it ceases to have its stated character as just-an-occurrence and incorrigible; or else it remains an occurrence, but one about which nothing can be said. It cannot be both.

Let me conclude this part of Chapter II with an analysis of the ways in which the various arguments fit together. Ayer's argument from (a) to (f) is one to which all the intervening steps are required. It is required that the awareness of sense-data be direct and unquestionable simply because that is Ayer's starting point, but to reach his conclusion, that such awareness can be the basis of empirical knowledge, it is required first that the sense-data be directly reflected in propositions, so that the propositions are based on the sense-data, but do not make claims for which the sense-data are not certain evidence (hence (b) and (c)), and secondly it is required that the sense-data have properties describable by the propositions (b) so that such propositions can exist, and so that further empirical knowledge may be founded on them (hence (d) and (e)). Part 4 has attacked Ayer's argument at several points.

First I have claimed that (a) cannot be the sort of thing it is claimed to be. 'A' is intended to show that we

are not generally aware of sense-data, but of things, and in 'B' that knowledge by acquaintance is not the catch-all analogy that Ayer makes it out to be. Second, (b) cannot stand in its claimed relation to (a) even if we allow that (a) is the sort of thing it is claimed to be. 'B' and 'C' argue that there is a gap between the occurrence of a sense-datum, and a description thereof, which cannot be bridged directly and incorrigibly as Ayer would have it. Third, (c) cannot be true of (b), for, as claimed in 'C', the describing of (b) is something learned, and something at which we cannot expect always to be correct. Errors in the application of predicates are errors in factual judgment, not verbal slips. Fourth, (d) is a good point in so far as a property-less sense-datum would be a ridiculous concept (unknowable in any case), but 'D' argues that these properties are not known directly, and that the exceptions of (e) do not rescue Ayer from the fact that descriptions involve classification, and classification is not an indubitably accurate, nor a directly given, activity or happening.

To put it more briefly, the getting from (a) to (f), if it is to be adequately performed, demands that the (a)/(b) relation be direct, resulting in (c), yet (b) must have characteristics as mentioned in (d) and (e) in order to support (f). Now, if, as we have been arguing, (a) to (b) is gap-ridden, and (c), being false, cannot support (b) anyway, and even if that were all right (d) is incompatible with

(b) and (c) yet is required for the move from (b) to (f), it would appear that Ayer's case is unsound.

* * *

PART 5: Conclusions to Chapter II.

Ayer's 'sense-datum' is a very unsatisfactory concept. Its plausibility rests on an oversight; what is overlooked is the ambiguity of the concept. On the one hand, Ayer would like the sense-datum to present describable predicates and relations, and to be the basis of other cognitive moves; on the other hand, he insists that the sense-datum be the content of a 'direct awareness'. I have attempted to argue that these two versions of the role of sense-data are not compatible, and I have argued, furthermore, that the latter (incorrigibility) is untenable on its own. Primitive experience is not adequately described in terms of direct, and complete, awareness of particular units (discrete items, or atomic elements).

Austin is shown, in the first chapter of the thesis, to be involved in what I think are comparable problems. He does not involve himself in the contradiction that Ayer does between the explicitly describable, and the explicitly directly apprehended. He is careful to rule out the possibility of noticing relations between items, and of attaching to them predicates which would make possible the description of them

as experienceable. But, if he avoids this fault of Ayer's, he still leaves himself squarely in the position of having to defend an atomistic account of primitive experience--the object of criticism in Chapter I.

Ayer's version of the 'direct awareness of sense-data' might have appeared the more plausible of the two theories of primitive experience because of the encouraging inclusion of the properties and relations basic to cognition, but this plausibility rested on an undiscovered incompatibility. When the propositions attendant on sense-data are shown to be cognitively separate from the data, and not 'incorrigible', then Ayer's 'direct awareness of sense-data' appears to be a close equivalent of Austin's 'apprehension of items by inspection merely'. That the cases presented by the two men are quite similar ought to be directly clear--apprehended by inspection merely, one might say--but I would further support their similarity on the following grounds: both cases prove inadequate (both claims prove, finally, incomprehensible) for the same sorts of reasons. Briefly, those reasons may be outlined as follows:

that in any case of 'noticing' and 'experience', and/or subsequent description, there is categorizing, classifying, distinguishing going on (see especially Chapter II, Part 4);

that in any apprehension of a particular ('item', 'sense-datum', and the like) there is logical

priority for a distinction, for a relational awareness holding two things apart in one elementary cognitive move (see especially Chapter I, Part 3); and

that primitive experience is not direct, not directly imposed on a (passive) receiver, but that the subject is always active, contributing general conceptual structuring, and specific description and classification, to the experience-able world (see especially Chapter II, Part 3).

The close family resemblances among these arguments are evident. In some form or other they are brought against Austin in Chapter I, and in Chapter II Ayer is shown to be vulnerable on the same points. It will be the purpose of Chapter III to argue that Austin presents criticisms of Ayer which expose just this kind of error. That is, in Sense and Sensibilia Austin uses arguments which depend on--at least implicitly--the inadequacies which I have claimed are basic to both Ayer's sense-data and to Austin's items.

I shall make two claims as a result. The first, of course, is that Austin's arguments against Ayer do work. The second is that Austin must have been unaware of why they work, since he himself makes mistakes comparable to those he criticizes in Ayer.

CHAPTER III

AUSTIN ON AYER

PART 1: The Concept of 'Evidence'.

A popular view of Austin's criticisms of Ayer in Sense and Sensibilia, has it that Austin presents descriptions of the main ordinary uses of key terms such as 'real', 'certain', 'direct', and 'evidence', then argues that any other uses of the terms are likely to do violence to the concepts. Thus, for example, Ayer is silly to have worries about the 'indirectness' of the preception of objects. We may want to say that seeing through a periscope is seeing indirectly, or that listening to a tape-recording is hearing an opera indirectly, but to say that I am perceiving my typewriter indirectly when I am sitting here typing on the machine itself, is a silly extension of the word which will not be helpful. On this popular view, Austin is simply refusing to listen to Ayer's arguments, is not interested in his technical redefinitions of terms, and deliberately avoids the philosophical problems by refusing to acknowledge that they exist.¹

This version of Austin's method appears to me to be inadequate. However contentious the principles of linguis-

¹ See for example, L.J. Goldstein, "On Austin's Understanding of Philosophy", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 1964-65, p. 223; and Sir Roy Harrod, "Sense and Sensibilia", Philosophy, 1963, p. 227.

tic phenomenology offered in "A Plea for Excuses",¹ it must be said that Austin does not just simply ignore philosophical problems because of an interest in the ordinary uses only of words which also have important philosophical uses. Often, for instance, he makes valuable contributions to the analysis of the concepts involved, and whether or not he gets his inspiration from ordinary uses does not affect the validity of his analysis of the logic of the concepts. One such concept is that of 'evidence'. I shall attempt to show that Austin's criticisms of Ayer's use of the term "evidence" constitute an important insight into the nature of evidence. I shall argue that Austin is essentially correct, and that he is right because his position implies the rejection of Ayer's claims about the givenness of the elements of experience, and depends, in turn, on the recognition of the active role of the subject in conceptual judgments.

A. The claims which Ayer makes about evidence are not unfamiliar. They have, in some version or other, a very wide vogue. The traditional empiricist position has a fairly standard structure. Hume, for instance, urges that we should not exceed what is given in experience when we assess the nature of causal relations. To speak of a "necessary connection" is to use a term with no application to the case. If one looks for the impression from which the idea of necessary

¹ Austin, "A Plea for Excuses", Philosophical Papers, p. 123.

connection is derived, one will not find any such thing. Only what does have its origin in impressions--in the given sense experience--is a well-founded concept. Thus it is that one goes beyond the evidence when one speaks of the necessary connection that 'is' the cause, and thus it is that one becomes susceptible to error. In every case of saying that one's past experience has been such-and-such a way, and that one expects one's future experience to continue in the same way, one's predictions, which go beyond the evidence, are open to error, and can never be conclusively verified beforehand.

There are three main points here. First there is the evidence; it is composed of impressions, the given sense-experience. Second, there is the going beyond the evidence, the inferring that something will continue to be the case, for instance. And, thirdly, there is the possibility of error, which is written into every judgment which goes beyond the given. Every statement which is not a direct report on sense impressions is an uncertain inference.

In Ayer's case the same three points are made. Their application is very wide. It will be recalled that Ayer speaks of various levels of data, and of many cases of advancing beyond the data, but that just as predicting future behaviour involves going beyond the evidence of past events, so there is a gap between the idea of a past event and its data, the present experience, and again the present experience of physical objects represents a step beyond the sense-data. Although the many cases are similar, the primary

data, the ultimate evidence, is sense-data.¹ The possibility of error (the ground of illusion, for instance) arises only when one makes inferences which go beyond the evidence, the sense-data. Then no claim can be conclusively verified.

Austin will argue that not every statement reporting perception of a material object is an advance beyond the evidence for it. But he may have very few supporters. A student of Brand Blanshard writes: "According to the Idealist view, which I am defending, ...all perception is characterized by inference, and therefore by evidence."² Attacking Austin for overlooking the philosophical problems while being overly concerned with the normal use of key terms, he continues:

In extending 'inference' beyond its normal range, I believe that I am merely pointing out that there is something in perceiving which shares important characteristics--i.e., those of going beyond the given, of using evidence, and of possibly being mistaken--with what we normally call inference.³ (My italics.)

Here we have someone from a very different position agreeing in substance with Ayer, and opposing Austin's arguments. The same three points are made here, too.

For Ayer, perceptual claims advance beyond the data. To speak of seeing a tree, for instance, is to claim on the basis of the given data that the perceived tree is not a hallucination or an illusion, but will continue to be perceivable during closer inspection, from other positions or by different senses, and that others may share the perception, and so on.

¹ See above, pp. 53-54.

² G.L. Vander Veer, "Austin on Perception", Review of Metaphysics, 1963-64, p. 558.

³ Ibid., p. 566.

I call a set of data an "object", that is, when it has enough consistency within itself (as a set of experiences) and with its surroundings (accompanying experiences) to prompt me to expect a similarity among future experiences. This is to make a claim which cannot be justified on the basis of the sense-data. The problem is the standard Humean problem of induction: going beyond the given evidence and courting uncertainty (the constant possibility of error) in every case.

What is equally important for the present case is the fact that for Ayer the sense-data are the ultimate evidence on which all subsequent moves are based. They are all our resources. Given them, we adopt, or fall into, or make, our rules about how we will use the evidence we have. It is their givenness, their incorrigibility, which constitutes the data as evidence.

B. There is, I think, an important ambiguity in the use of the word "evidence" in all of Ayer's case. The word has two roles: in the one case evidence is considered as the given, and therefore as a good or sound base; and in the other case evidence is considered as the taken, as support for some other claim. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary indicates the distinction. The two main entries under "evidence" are:

1. the quality or condition of being evident. ("evident" in its turn is given as) obvious to the sight, clear to the understanding or the judgment, indubitable, certain.

2. ground for belief; that which tends to prove or disprove any conclusion.

Often, then, (2) our resources are used as evidence for further claims, conclusions or ways of speaking. But the reason why they are used as evidence, however, is that they are evidence. In this (1) use of "evidence", weight is placed on the given or evident aspect of evidence. Ayer plays on this use of the word in order to make the connection between his sense-data, which are, after all, "clear", "obvious", "evident", "indubitable", and "certain", and the use of the data as evidence for other claims. It may well be the case that evidence as the taken and evidence as the given are concepts which deserve to be kept apart, at least until it is clearer just how they ought to be related.

I would suggest that if, as Ayer does, we wish to take the concept of 'evidence as the given' as intimately allied with sense-data, then we ought to be quite sure not to allow the fact that we use one word, "evidence", for two jobs, lead us to confuse the notion of sense-data with that of ground of, or support for, perceptual claims. Austin's items, from Chapter I, are also given, apprehended immediately, and named without judging, so that they, too, have the same sort of status as Ayer's sense-data. Of course, Austin is not using items as evidence in that sense. They are certainly evident, however, or evidence as the given.

C. At this point it is worthwhile to use an illustration from Wittgenstein, again. In Philosophical Investigations he spends some time discussing 'names'. In remark # 46 he quotes Socrates in the Theaetetus, who describes a view of primary elements of which all is composed. These primary elements are not described, they can only be named. Proper names signify simples. Wittgenstein says that his 'objects' (in the Tractatus¹) were such primary elements. In remark # 47 he presents a long argument:

But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed?--What are the simple constituent parts of a chair?--The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms?--"Simple" means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense 'composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'....

To the philosophical question: "Is the visual image of this tree composite, and what are its component parts?" the correct answer is: "That depends on what you understand by 'composite'." (And that is of course not an answer but a rejection of the question.)²

Wittgenstein goes on to discuss language games other than the ordinary in a given case. We usually speak of a "broom". In a sense it is a composite object, and we might speak of a "handle and a brush fixed together". This would be not unlike the sense-datum language recommended by Ayer, in which the perception of an object is broken down into its given parts, and described as a composite of them. In remark # 60 Wittgenstein asks:

¹ Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Pears and McGuinness (trs.), Second impression, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963. The topic is introduced at number 2.01 and is discussed largely in the 2.02s. At 3.2 names and naming are taken up.

² Philosophical Investigations, remark # 47.

In what sense is an order in the second game an analysed form of an order in the first? Does the former lie concealed in the latter, and is it now brought out by analysis?--True, the broom is taken to pieces when one separates broomstick and brush; but does it follow that the order to bring the broom also consists of corresponding parts?¹

Shortly after, he continues:

To say, however, that a sentence in (b) is an 'analysed' form of one in (a) readily seduces us into thinking that the former is the more fundamental form; that it alone shows what is meant by the other, and so on.²

Now, I do not want to over-emphasize the analogies present here. In a sense the simples of the Tractatus are similar to what I have tried to show items and sense-data to be. Items, too, are named but not described. Sense-data, once they have been interpreted consistently with 'direct apprehension' also lose their one-to-one relationship with propositions describing them. On the other hand, the Tractatus is a work of logic, not of epistemology, and it is a mistake, as Miss Anscombe argues,³ to think of 'objects' as sense-data or elementary observables. To the extent, however, that Wittgenstein's arguments are rejections of 'simple' as a concept of what cannot be described, but only named, they are relevant to this thesis. They also point up another issue with admirable clarity. The component parts of something are only component parts for some purpose. They can be

¹ Ibid., # 60.

² Ibid., # 63.

³ G.E.M. Anscombe, An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, Second edition revised, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1963, pp. 25 ff.

selected as such by someone who is interested in analyzing the original unit in that way. But there is no sense to a claim that certain kinds of elements are the absolutely simple, the fundamental elements, out of which the other composites are constructed.

Is there a useful parallel between this elucidation of the misuse of "simple", and Ayer's use of "evidence"? Ayer would have us think that there are several levels of evidence or data, some of which are appropriate for some constructions, others for other sorts of claims; but also wants to reserve the ultimate, fundamental place for sense-data, which are the evidence upon which all else is built. Should we not say, at this point, that all evidence is taken as evidence for some purpose, to support some claim, say, and that it is a mistake to think of evidence in an absolute, fundamental sense? I suggest that Austin has done just that.

D. Austin sides with Carnap to some extent, when Carnap urges that "it doesn't much matter what sort of sentence we classify as an observation sentence," a suggestion with which Ayer quarrels.¹ Austin's arguments reject the notion that some sentences are fundamentally evident--evidence-providing. Some sentences are less adventurous than others, to be sure, but "no kind of sentence is, as such, incapable, once uttered, of being amended or retracted."²

¹ Austin, Sense and Sensibilia, p. 108.

² Ibid., p. 112. It is at this point that Austin adds his 'Magenta' case to the discussion of verbal-slips-only into which we entered in Chapter II of this thesis.

Next he argues that if the claim is taken as factual (not a claim about kinds of sentences as such, but about some sentences in fact), then there are candidates in the material object language ("This is a pig," said in a barnyard of a very obvious case at one's feet) which are just as incorrigible as some sense-datum statements might be.¹

The most interesting of the subsequent points is to the effect that it is a gross misuse of the notion of 'evidence' to claim that every material object statement needs evidence.² If in casual conversation I remark that I live in Edmonton, my hearer may verify the assertion if he wishes. I do not need to verify it for myself. In fact, nothing whatever that I might do could count as verifying it for myself. Nothing could count as evidence in this case. Similarly, when testifying in court, I am giving evidence to the jury, so that they will have evidence of the shooting's taking place. I do not, myself, have evidence of the shooting at all. I SAW the shooting taking place.³

Furthermore, the material object statement does not entail any particular set or sets of sense-data statements.⁴ Similarly, to speak of handle and brush was not necessarily clearer, more accurate, than speaking of the broom. The

¹ Ibid., pp. 114-115.

² Ibid., pp. 117-118.

³ Ibid., p. 116.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 121-123.

analyzed version does not necessarily stand to the unanalyzed version as clearer and more complete. So the sense-datum reduction of material object talk is not properly characterized as the accurate version for which the material object talk is a misleading shorthand.

Of course, to say that Austin on 'evidence' is like Wittgenstein on 'simples', and that the implications are similar in each case, does not count as an argument in support of Austin's line. It is simply an illustration of Austin's sort of position. But I think it a useful illustration; it does help clarify what I think is most exciting in Austin's arguments.

* * *

PART 2: Conclusions.

The following points are made, or implied, by Austin's analysis of the concept of 'evidence':

1. On the grounds that no kind of sentence is fundamentally and incorrigibly an evidence-giving sentence, and that, in fact, many different kinds of sentences are usable as evidence in different situations, we may conclude that evidence as the given is quite distinct from evidence as the taken.

2. If sense-datum sentences are no more liable to be usable as evidence, and are no more likely to be good

evidence if so used, then we may say that what makes something a case of evidence is not its being incorrigibly evident.

3. Since to be evidence something must be taken as such in certain conditions and for certain purposes by someone, evidence must always be a product of judgment, certainly not simple, and presented as undescribable.

Now, if Austin is right about evidence, then Ayer's sense-data will not be the absolute foundations of all claims to knowledge, evidence for all perceptual statements, and so on. Nor will sense-datum statements, when they are used as evidence, be incorrigibly-given elements describing the sole content of experience. The subject must be active in experiencing--attending to certain aspects, considering certain conditions, and sometimes making deliberate judgments. Just as experience cannot be analyzed into simple elements directly apprehended, so evidence does not consist of unquestionable data presented immediately to the subject.

To the extent that Austin's own items were to be obvious and evident, but not selected and sorted out by a subject discriminating for significant reasons, they, too, are implicitly criticized in Austin's analysis of 'evidence'.

* * *

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